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A history of the English-speaking Baptist churches of North Wales

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**A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING
BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NORTH WALES**

**A dissertation presented by
Martin Trevor M'Caw**

To

The School of Theology and Religious Studies

**Bangor University
Bangor**

May 2010

A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING BAPTIST CHURCHES

OF NORTH WALES

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I am grateful to the churches and the North West Baptist Association for granting me full access to their archives. I am also grateful for the personal help I have received from the many people who willingly gave me their time. Conversations with Peter Leavers, Trevor Casey, Geoffrey Jell, Olive Peters, Lucille Ingman, William Evans, Norman Land, John Davies, Delyth Wyn Davies, Ceris Roberts, Ioan Davies, Einwen Jones and Eleanor Bowen have provided important information which was unavailable in archive material. Correspondence on particular issues with John Rice Rowlands, T.J. Russell-Jones, Eifion Morgan-Wynne, Nigel Wright, Gwilym Hughes, Norman Harries, and John Chester also yielded valuable personal insights. I am grateful to Mrs. Rhiannon Jones of Mynydd Isa for her translation of Welsh source material, and especially to Professor D.D. Morgan for his encouragement and guidance.

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THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NORTH WALES

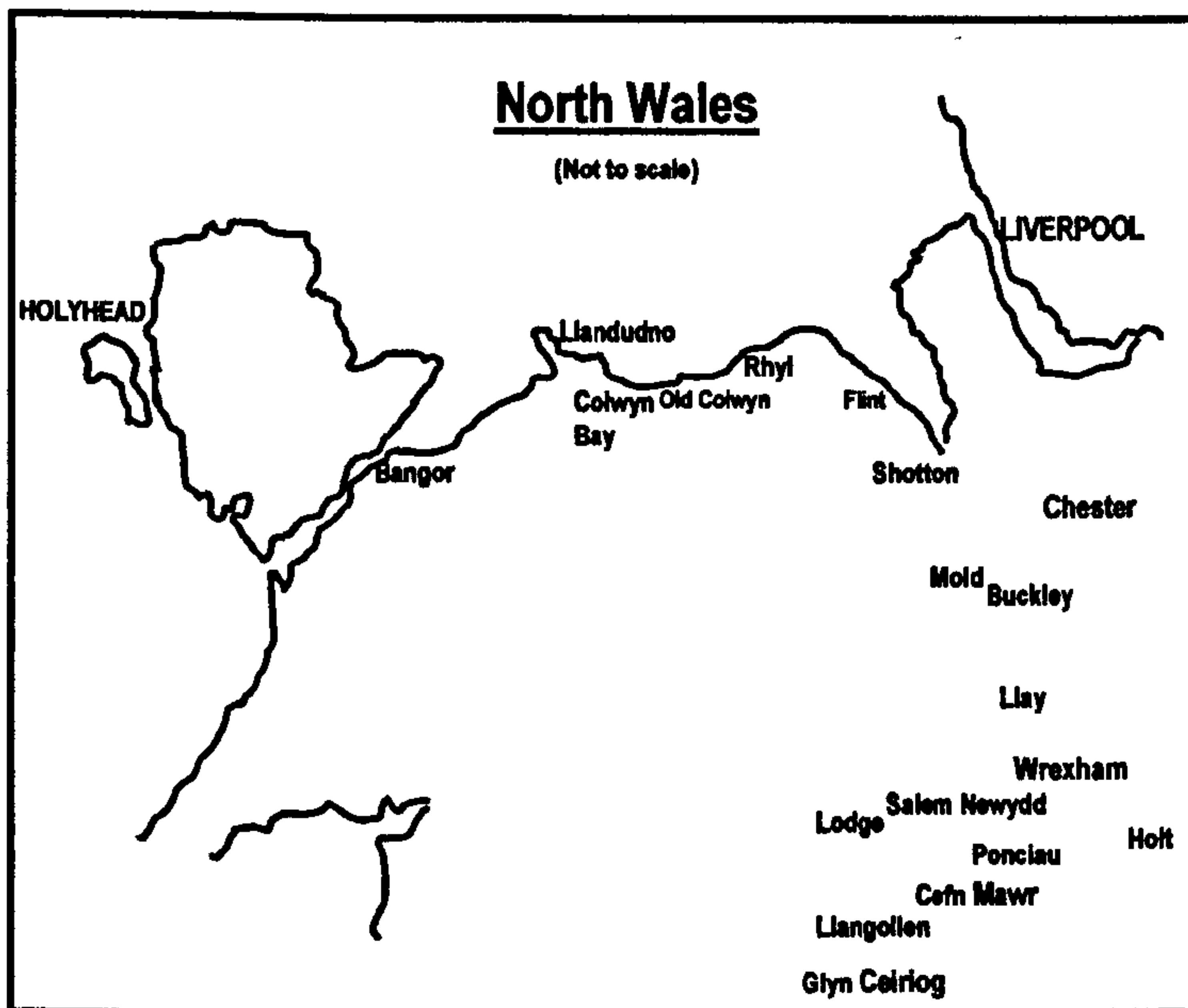
ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to chart the history of the English-speaking churches of North Wales from the time of the commonwealth to the present. Beginning with the radical separatism of Morgan Llwyd at Wrexham during the puritan period, it describes and analyzes the development of religious thought and structures through the restoration and the older dissent (chapter one), the eighteenth century including the Evangelical Revival and Sandemanianism (chapter two), the expansion of the churches including those on the coastal strip during the nineteenth century (chapters three and four) and consolidation including the challenges of secularization during the twentieth (chapters five and six). The Introduction sets out the rationale and the Conclusion provides a reflective summary.

Three essential elements form the parameters within which the following analysis has been made, namely geography, language and the Baptist principle of associating. The way in which an English medium community formulated its religious identity within a Welsh, and often Welsh speaking, context is assessed, and how it did so well away from the very different English language Baptist life in South Wales while diverging also from mainstream Baptist life in England. As such the dissertation could be interpreted as a study in divergence, assimilation and the development of a specific regional-national identity. The backcloth for the individual chapters is determined by United Kingdom-wide or British, national (Welsh), or denominational topicalities each of which may stand alone or exist in combination with the others. In broad terms the formative years are dominated by British considerations, national (Welsh) factors predominate during the nineteenth century, whilst the twentieth century is dominated by denominational concerns. Throughout the study the three formative factors of geography, language and the specifically Baptist principle of associating emerge as the key elements in the evolution of the English-speaking Baptist churches and the North Wales English Baptist Union.

INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The purpose of this study is to explore the history of the English-speaking Baptist churches of North Wales and the North Wales English Baptist Union (NWEBU), which have been a previously neglected area of Baptist history, and to show how the three formative factors of geography, language and associating shaped this movement.



W.T.Whitley's *Baptists of North West England 1649-1913*¹ published in 1913 contains only the briefest historical outlines. The NWEBU churches are included because the book was prepared for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association which NWEBU had joined in 1912. The title illustrates the English assumption that North Wales was an appendix of the North West rather than an entity in its own right. The North Wales union's churches are not mentioned in J.H. Briggs' *The English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century*² whilst Ian Randall's *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*³ has only the briefest references to North Wales Baptist life stating that the Baptist academics, the Old Testament scholar H. H. Rowley and the modern church historian Keith Robbins, held chairs at different times at Bangor University

In comparison with South Wales the number of English-speaking Baptist churches in North Wales is minuscule, so their direct affiliation to English denominational organization offers an understandable reason for omission in works majoring on Baptists in Wales. Whilst T.M. Bassett's comprehensive book *The Welsh Baptists*⁴ of 1977 contains a brief reference to the eighteenth century evangelistic work of David Jones in Wrexham and Newbridge, the principal English Baptist churches of North Wales are omitted. Similarly only the briefest reference is made to the formation of the North Wales English Baptist Union in 1879 and its subsequent affiliation to the Lancashire and Cheshire Association.

Although they shared many things in common with their fellow Protestant dissenters in the realms of theology, politics and social development, the North Wales English Baptist churches have struggled with the twin regional difficulties created by geography and language.

¹ W.T.Whitley, *Baptists of North West England* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1913).

² J. H. Briggs, *The English Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1994).

³ I. M. Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2005), pp, 202 & 352 (footnote 170).

⁴ T.M. Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists* (Swansea: Ilston Press, 1977).

Whilst the topography of Wales has created a natural isolation of North and South Wales, geography is broader than location. This study explores the consequences of how geography gave Wrexham a strategic importance during the civil war, whilst the eighteenth century commercial links with Nantwich and Shrewsbury served to strengthen the development of Wrexham as a market town. In the nineteenth century the migration of population due to the industrial revolution and the arrival of the railway not only anglicized the north eastern border but led to North Wales becoming regarded as a virtual appendage to the north west of England. Tourism consolidated this view further during the twentieth century as the coastal resorts developed their provision for the day tripper as well as the holiday maker. The geographical length of North Wales also contributed to the administratively convenient division of the NWEBU into the coastal and inland areas around the middle of the twentieth century.

The immediate Wrexham area has always had a strong English-speaking population, but for the remainder of North Wales barriers of linguistic particularities created a heightened sense of geographical isolation and made for the development of a specific identity. Language and geography are inextricably linked. The English-speaking Baptist churches developed along the eastern border and the coastal fringe. There has been no significant development of English-speaking Baptist churches within the hinterland. The study explores the administrative problems emanating from the parallel worlds of the English and Welsh-speaking churches particularly in the twentieth century. At times it created a mutually ambivalent relationship with BUGB, while there was, until recently, no constructive relationship with BUW because their North Wales churches were Welsh-speaking. The decision of NWEBU in 2007 to seek membership as an affiliated association within BUW reflected the constitutional realities of a post-devolution Wales as well as responding to the demands of effective mission. By retaining its links with BUGB via the North West Association, NWEBU is operating on a basis of dual nationality which illustrates its historical dilemma of existing between English and Welsh establishments.

From their beginnings in the seventeenth century two basic principles within each local Baptist church have been the baptism of believers and the congregational principle of government. Autonomy, however, has never been synonymous with isolation. There may have been a pragmatic element in the seventeenth-century development of the principles of association, in what B.R. White described as 'the collection of issues haphazardly dealt with' being in fact 'an attempt to impose some order on a spreading, growing community threatened by the chaos which followed local independence and local initiative at a time when ...the world had been turned upside down.'⁵ However Baptist scholars such as Ernest A. Payne, B.R. White and others have clearly demonstrated that within the theology and practice of seventeenth century Baptists, association life became the foundation for a sturdy and pronounced independence. In I.M. Randall's words 'Baptist churches were, from the beginning, autonomous.'⁶ In the formative years of the Cromwellian period active concern was expressed regarding unity doctrine, polity, and action. In the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644 the key phrase for building that unity was 'the counsel and help of one another'.⁷ White regards this as the embryonic 'convictions which underlay the development of the association of individual churches in a district or region.'⁸ The congregational principle of governance within Baptist church life comprises both the autonomy of the local church and its participation in the mutuality of life within the regional association and the national union.

By the 1650s the more frequent term for the associational gatherings was 'General Meeting' but the difference in nomenclature did not indicate difference in meaning.⁹ The Tetsworth Agreement of 1653 stated 'true churches of Christ ought to acknowledge one another to be such and hold a firm communion each with other'.¹⁰ The early covenants

5 B.R. White. *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1983), p.52.

6 Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, (p.4.

7 White. *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, p.65.

8 Ibid.

9 Cf. B.R. White (ed.), *Association Records of the Particular Bapiosts of England and Wales and Ireland in 1660*, 3 vols. (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1971-4).

10 White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, p.69.

established two major principles of inter-congregational cooperation. The first was that churches belonged to an association in a way which paralleled an individual's membership of their local church. The second was one of motivation 'to keep each other pure and to clear the profession of the Gospel from scandal',¹¹ whether it was an individual belonging to a church or a church belonging to an association. E.A Payne made a similar point with reference to the General Baptists adding they were more connexional in character. Their churches were linked with local associations and also with their General Assembly.¹² Throughout this study precedence will be afforded to local church life, the microcosm as it were, within the macrocosm of the regional association and national union. Baptist ecclesiology ensures that decisions in the local church determine the nature of its response to initiatives emanating from association and union, and conversely, whether or not to seek the support and guidance which are available from the regional association or national union.

From their earliest days Baptists have met in geographical 'associations' of varying sizes. Sometimes an association has encompassed a county; sometimes a broader area. From 1912 the North Wales English Baptist Union (NWEBU) became a district within the much larger Lancashire and Cheshire Association. Until the reorganization of associations within the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) in the late 1990s they included a varying number of districts. The Lancashire and Cheshire Association had several districts within its borders at varying times. In Baptist circles the term 'union' generally stands for a national grouping of associations such as the Baptist Union of Great Britain, or of Wales, or Scotland. Ireland however is an exception. In 1999 the Irish Union, which covers both sides of the border, decided to return to its historic name of the Association of Baptist churches in Ireland. The application of the term 'Union' for the English Baptist churches in North Wales is distinctive if not unique. Although the original NWEBU minute book is lost, it can be surmised the title 'Union' was used in a conglomerate sense in order to preserve a specific linguistically based identity and, perhaps, to promote a missionary strategy distinct from that of the Welsh-churches of the

¹¹ E.A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1959), p. 28.

Baptist Union of Wales (BUW). By way of contrast the term 'union' amongst Congregational churches denoted county groupings as well as regional and national.¹³

Continuity between original principle and contemporary practice has been reflected recently by two resolutions presented to BUGB Council in November 2008. Under the heading 'Our Christian basis and identity' it was stressed Baptists are 'people of covenant – of mutual commitment',¹⁴ that 'we have a picture of interdependence',¹⁵ and 'we recognise that our reasons for associating are mission, mutual support, discipline, teaching, and guidance.'¹⁶ It was further noted that 'throughout our history as Baptists we have lived creatively with both a commitment to the fullness of the church being found in each local congregation, and at the same time affirming our need for one another within the wider body of God's people.'¹⁷

The same principle of association applied to North Wales, except in the seventeenth century when there was just a single church in Wrexham. As a disparate congregation of Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists it was preoccupied with discovering its identity and coping with the difficulties of post restoration persecution within a mutually supportive network of dissent. The provision by the Edwards family of the outdoor baptistery on the Rhual estate created a Baptist link with Hill Cliffe, near Warrington, and Nantwich. More formalized associating developed from the mid eighteenth century with links between Wrexham, Glyn Ceiriog, Nantwich and later in the century with Shrewsbury. Associating came into its own in the nineteenth century when the majority of the North Wales English Baptist churches were founded.

The three key factors of geography, language and associating must also be considered within broader parameters of United Kingdom-wide, specifically Welsh, and

¹² Ibid, p.28.

¹³ See R. Tudor Jones, *Congregationalism in England: 1662-1762* (London: Independent Press, 1962), pp.174-5.

¹⁴ *Report of the Roles and Tasks Group to BUGB Council November 2008*, p.2.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

denominational developments that act as general over-arching influences. Within the formative years from 1650 to 1715 the national influences of the civil war and inter-regnum, the restoration, the Glorious Revolution, the Crisp controversy and the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 have to be taken into account. The framework for the eighteenth century rests more on regional developments within Wales in terms of the emergence of association life amongst the General and Particular sectors of the Baptist community and the influence of Sandemanianism. Regional political, social, ecclesiastical and educational developments, sometimes allied to an emerging sense of nationhood within Wales, set the overall framework during the nineteenth century. By way of contrast the twentieth century framework is seen to be shaped more by developments within national denominational life emanating from the BUGB.

The sources used are fully listed in the bibliography. Details relating to the contextual framework for each century are derived from published secondary sources. For the formative years there is only the Old Meeting to consider and its relationships with local puritanism. Whilst the background details and analyses are all accessible through published sources, the primary source of Thomas Edwards of Rhual's correspondence with David Lloyd of Northop and Isaac Chauncy of London provides particular individual insight regarding his Baptist belief and attitude to the Crisp controversy. Throughout the remainder of the study details relating to the outworking of the churches within association and union life are derived from unpublished primary sources in church archives, county record offices and the archives of the North West Baptist Association.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The three principal factors in the formation of the North Wales English Baptist churches are not prominent through the formative years. Geographically Wrexham was a town of strategic military and administrative importance during the civil war and the inter-regnum but in relation to other major ecclesiological and theological developments it was isolated by its north easterly position. Nonetheless, A.H. Dodd refers to it as the 'place of an influential Puritan congregation.'¹ Thomas Richards calculated that more than a third of some 643 nonconformists in the St. Asaph diocese were 'found in Wrexham and its environs.'²

Dodd makes an important point about the influence of language in his suggestion that the Old Meeting probably worshipped in English which 'helped to push forward the anglicizing of what had been hitherto a predominantly Welsh town.'³ Richards showed that the larger number of Puritans in the Wrexham area 'had distinctly English surnames,'⁴ and that 'not even Morgan Llwyd's comprehensive genius was potent enough to make Cymric the atmosphere of Wrexham.'⁵ In acknowledging the significance of Philip Henry's influence amongst the local Presbyterians, he adds that although he was of Welsh extraction, Philip Henry 'could not speak Welsh.'⁶ Linguistic issues in the seventeenth century did not have the same significance as they did in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

An element of associating was present from the beginning, but not in the formally organized manner of later centuries. An informal dissenting fellowship emerged in which a Presbyterian orientated fraternity developed round Philip Henry and, whilst not mutually exclusive, a fellowship with Independent inclinations developed round

¹ A.H. Dodd, *History of Wrexham* (Wrexham : Hughes and Son, 1957), p.64.

² T. Richards, *The Religious Census of 1676* (London: Hon. Soc. of Cymmrodorion, 1927), p. 67.

³ Dodd, *History of Wrexham*, p.64.

⁴ Richards, *The Religious Census of 1676*, p. 67.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

John Evans of the Old Meeting as evidenced by the part he played in securing the release of James Owen from Caerwys gaol.⁷

Wrexham Baptist Church eventually became the first English Baptist church in North Wales. The foundation was laid in the mid-1630s through the ministry of Walter Cradock, one of the leading Welsh Puritans of his generation, who 'helped turn Wrexham into a fractious centre of unconventional ideas.'⁸ Instead of reading morning prayers he 'expounded the scriptures with such heavenly fire and plainness as greatly affected the people.'⁹ Earlier editions of the *Baptist Union Handbook* give 1635 as the year the church was founded.¹⁰ Possibly through the research of local historian G.V. Price, this was amended to 1630 in order to reflect the pioneering work of Walter Cradock. However it is safer to assume the founding date was closer to 1650 when the more distinct emergence of an identifiable dissenting group occurred under the leadership of Morgan Llwyd during the Puritan ascendancy of the Cromwellian period.

The persecution years of the Restoration were followed by a time of consolidation from 1689 to 1715 in which the New Meeting diverged from the Old Meeting to assert its Presbyterian identity. Then in 1713 following the baptism of its minister John Williams, the Old Meeting began to emerge as a Baptist church, although a remnant of Congregationalists remained until the middle of the eighteenth century. The formative years closed amidst the revenge of the Tory gentry in the Jacobite riots of 1715.

In 1634 the Bishop of St. Asaph wrote he was 'not anywhere troubled by nonconformity,'¹¹ but by 1640 he was writing about 'a conventicle of mean persons in the Wrexham district.'¹² Local Puritanism might have been in its infancy but its cries were audible in St. Asaph. Timothy Rees relates how Timothy Middleton, an

⁷ See below, p.41 .

⁸ G. H. Jenkins, *Protestant Dissenters in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), p.2.

⁹ T. Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales* (London: J. Snow, 1861), p.52.

¹⁰ *Baptist Union Handbook* for 1864.

¹¹ T. Richards, *History of the Puritan Movement in Wales* (London: National Eisteddfod Assoc. 1920), p. 27.

¹² Ibid.

influential local citizen, asked an innkeeper why he sold less malt than usual. He replied that Walter Cradock had changed the people by preaching. Middleton angrily declared he would drive him away, and 'made an interest with some gentry and did just that.'¹³ When Cradock was forced out of Wrexham in 1636 for his puritanism, Morgan Llwyd, who had been converted through his ministry in 1635, joined him in exile in Shropshire. Although neither man remained in Wrexham, Cradock had lit a flame which was rekindled by the return to Wrexham of Morgan Llwyd some fifteen years later. Through his influence the Old Meeting became the most prominent of the dissenting causes in the wider district. Never formally organized, it became a useful grouping for mutual support, prayer, and debate.

Morgan Llwyd: Radical Independent and Mystic

Morgan Llwyd was one of the most influential figures in Welsh puritanism. His Welsh writings are more prolific than his English works but as he became a key figure for the foundation of the English-speaking cause which became known as the Old Meeting it is worth considering his English theological contribution in some detail.

Morgan Llwyd returned to Wrexham c.1646/7, but there is some uncertainty about the details. In 1650 the commission appointed under the Act for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales included five members of the new church at Wrexham, and Vavasor Powell who was an 'Approver' under this act. G.V. Price assumed that 'Cradock with William Wroth, Morgan Llwyd and Vavasor Powell joined together in Wrexham and formed a community composed of Presbyterians, Baptists, and Independents, but they had no chapel, they preached in the Beast Market, Eagles Meadow and other places.'¹⁴ However Cradock had left Wrexham c.1635, and Vavasor Powell was an itinerant. When Morgan Llwyd returned to Wrexham Cradock was ministering in South Wales. They may well have preached individually but not together on any regular basis. A.N. Palmer suggested that Morgan Llwyd was a decided Independent by 1650, and is certain that by 1651 the Independent church was already in existence meeting regularly for prayer, communion and fellowship at the parish church, joining

¹³ Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales*, p.53.

¹⁴ G.V. Price, *The Old Meeting, Its Times, Ministers and People; The History of the Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham* (Wrexham: E. Jones and Sons [1930]), p.41.

with the Presbyterians who were probably founded by Ambrose Mostyn. In this manner they were 'waiting on the ministry of Mr. Lloyd (Morgan Llwyd) who, amongst themselves was no more than a private member.'¹⁵ D.R. Thomas suggested that 'Ambrose Mostyn, Morgan Lloyd (Llwyd), Vavasor Powell, Ambrose Lewis, a candidate for ministry, and Richard Hughes had a grant of money and worked from this centre.'¹⁶ R.J. Anderson agreed that there was a varied scene. 'Many congregational ministers continued to preach in parish churches, whilst private meetings for godly conference continued much as they always had done over and above gathered churches.'¹⁷

A.H. Dodd linked the arrival of Morgan Llwyd with a Roundhead objective to 'plant the gospell amongst Welshmen.'¹⁸ A group of Welsh puritans including Sir John Trevor and Col. Simon Thelwall, MP for Denbigh, arranged with Sir Thomas Myddleton of Chirk to send Morgan Llwyd and Ambrose Mostyn to Wrexham as evangelists with support from the public funds. This view is supported by S.K. Roberts.¹⁹ It seems that Llwyd's return to Wrexham was not entirely his personal decision. Alongside any subjective response to an inward call of God in returning to the place of his conversion, there was an objective element of strategic religious management based on the geographic location of Wrexham which, although only a small market town, was an important commercial centre particularly in the wool trade, hence its links with Cheshire and Shropshire.

Without question Morgan Llwyd was an Independent in every sense of the word. To confirmed Anglicans he was a revolutionary. Staid Presbyterians found his Independency and millennial expectations controversial. His sermons and writings are permeated with mysticism. In letters to Morgan Llwyd written from Dublin in 1653 Col. John Jones, 'The Regicide', twice mentions difficulty in understanding his mystical prose. In the first, dated 30 August 1653, he wrote 'your little booke is in the Presse ...but Truly Dearest frind, I find some expressions in it ...that I cannot

¹⁵ A.N. Palmer, *A History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham* (Wrexham: Woodall, Minshull and Thomas, 1881), p.30.

¹⁶ D.R. Thomas, *History of the Diocese of St. Asaph* (London: S.P.C.K., 1888).

¹⁷ R.J. Acheson, *Radical Puritans in England, 1550-1660* (London: Longmans, 1990), p.51.

¹⁸ Dodd, *History of Wrexham*, p. 57.

¹⁹ S.K. Roberts. s.n. 'Llwyd, Morgan', *The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol.34 (2004), p.177.

possibly understand as yet ... untill I receive a little more light from you therein.’²⁰

A month later on 30 September he wrote:

I confess the discourse is exceedingly good and spirituall according to my Understanding, yet my selfe and many other sober wise Christians here conceive that if it had been penned in a language or still less parabolicall, and in more plane Scripture expressions, it would be more useful. Babes must be fed with milk.²¹

There was little doubt that he possessed genius. R. Tudur Jones listed many of the sources that shaped his ideas and theology including Jacob Boehme, Peter Sterry (chaplain to Oliver Cromwell), John Saltmarsh, William Erbery, a pioneer puritan from Cardiff, the Quakers, the Cambridge Platonists, Richard Baxter, the Fifth Monarchists and the Levellers. However he was no plagiarist. ‘He did not borrow, he integrated.’²²

Morgan Llwyd was primarily a pastor so his writings, theology, political convictions and actions must be viewed as aspects of his ministry and its enduring legacy to the Old Meeting. His formative influence came from Walter Cradock who was not a millenialist. It is likely that his millenarianism developed during his time with the parliamentary forces. S.K. Roberts is not certain that he was ever formally a chaplain, but thinks that he may well have been amongst the Welsh ministers in Portsmouth who petitioned parliament.²³

Outlining the basis of Morgan Llwyd’s millenarianism G.F. Nuttall comments, ‘for men to whom any sense of “real presence” in the sacrament was abhorrent as a rag of popery, the New Testament reference of the Lord’s Supper to his Second Coming possessed a strong potency.’²⁴ Having an implicit faith in the scripture’s unfulfilled prophecies had to be interpreted with a contemporary relevance which created a powerful eschatological message. The calculation of the time factor in biblical prophecies became a key link between scripture and contemporary events. A

²⁰ J.G. Jones and G.W. Owen (eds), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol 3 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 138.

²¹ J. Davies, (ed), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol. 2 (Bangor and London: Jarvis and Foster, 1908), p.302.

²² R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, R. Pope (ed) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 41.

²³ S.K. Roberts, ‘Llwyd, Morgan’, p.177.

²⁴ G.F. Nuttall, *The Welsh Saints 1640-1660* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957), p.45.

combination of a literal interpretation of Hebrew numerology and Ussher's calculation that creation happened in 4004BC produced forecasts of the imminent return of Christ as king. Morgan Llwyd expected the end of the world by 1715. 1656 was deemed significant because it reflected the number of years between Creation and the Flood, and 1666 because it contained the number of the Beast, 666, from the Book of Revelation.

Morgan Llwyd's millenarianism was not altogether extraordinary during such a time of upheaval. Linking Vavasor Powell and Morgan Llwyd with the Manifestarians and the Seekers, G.F. Nuttall suggested that theologically they were the equivalent of the revolutionary economics expressed by the Diggers and the revolutionary social life expressed by the Levellers.²⁵ Or as R. Tudur Jones put it, 'Morgan Llwyd gave the most shocking expression to the Puritan's sense that God was with them in the struggle.'²⁶ It was in this spirit that he traveled to the north of England in 1651 with Jenkin Jones and Vavasor Powell having raised a local troop to contribute to the war of the Commonwealth against the Scots. The co-ordinator of this action was Thomas Harrington who was very much a millennialist.

The poem *Our Lord is Coming Once Again* clearly reflects an immediate eschatological expectation:

Our Lord is coming once againe, as all the scriptures say
Even so lord Jesus quickly come and make no long delay.

Holy Communion reflects alongside the commemoration of past redemption a future consummation, as expressed in the final two verses:

By breaking bread we show thy death and mind thy wondrous love
Unill thou come to us againe in glory from above.

Then shall the sun moone stars & aire, and earth even changed bee
& wicked men and devills shall roare but then secure are wee.²⁷

The poem entitled *VIII 1648* uses the analogy of the seasons to outline an eschatological timetable:

In this our Anno of foure parts the winter and the spring

²⁵ Ibid, p.46.

²⁶ Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, p.41.

²⁷ T.E. Ellis (ed), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol. I (Bangor and London: Jarvis and Foster, 1899), p.9.

the summer and the harvest last, newes true and great I bring.

Winter illustrates the tyranny of popery:

our reformation mangled was, our blossomd trueths were ript
as errours and as heresys, our christian freedom clipt

Spring reveals his sense of eschatological imminence based on his biblical
calculations:

fifty goes big, or fifty sixe
or sixty five some say
But within mans age, hope to see
all old things flung away.

Summer illustrates the victory Christ will bring when the Papists meet their match:

feare not the pates of Jesuits
our Jesus them outwitts
now they are neere their journeyes end
lett satan tyre his tits.

He reflects the diversity of the true church as the body of Christ:

Its true we diuffer in small points
as clocks in cittyes do
some travellers do lag behind
who yet to Salem go.

He runs through branches of the church making comments on each in the light of his
expectations clearly recognising his millenarian views and being prepared to stand up
and be counted for them:

call me a chiliast if you please
or giddy headed foole
when those days come whereof I speake
your wisdome will be coole.

He calls on England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland to make ready, 'O bee not leavend
with the times...now dresse your gardens make your beds...'. The Lord is coming
and the church must be prepared:

Agree, Agree. You sing one song
but differ in the tone
Else Christ or Antichrist will come
and make you run in one.

Then comes the harvest of Christ's kingdom:

In summer Christ is all in all

as Pope in winter was.
But after harvest God is all
Then, never turne our glasse. ²⁸

Millennial sentiments and expectations are reflected in the correspondence between Morgan Llwyd's church in Wrexham, Cromwell's army and Major General Harrison. The letter of 12 July 1651 states 'The Faith of the saints here is much raised to a confident expectation of the great works of God ...to thresh the mountains ...The work is done, tis decreed in heaven we shall shortly sing together the song of Moses and of the Lamb'.²⁹ Similar views are expressed in the letter of congratulation sent to Cromwell by the church at Wrexham after the battle of Worcester. 'Christ has revealed His own arm, and broke the arm of the mighty once and again ... so that to conclude (in Ezekiel's phrase) there will be found no roller to bind the late king's arm to hold a sword again.'³⁰

The turning point for Morgan Llwyd's millennial expectations came as a consequence of Cromwell's dissolution of the nominated parliament of 1653 and becoming the protector. In all but name Cromwell had become king. For a millenarian such as Llwyd, Cromwell had usurped the place which rightfully belonged to the returning Christ. That Presbyterians became more prominent in national affairs at the expense of Independents also added to his sense of disillusionment. Whilst a considerable number of the Wrexham church signed the 'Word for God', a petition protesting against Cromwell's usurpation of power, there is some doubt whether Morgan Llwyd actually signed his name, or whether it was used without his consent. There is no doubt that a deep sense of betrayal refocused his mind on Habbakuk's long term vision 'it may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed.'³¹

As an expression of his reaction to the political turmoil, his theology became more introspective. Heaven and hell became inner realities as much as external locations. In choosing to respond to the spiritual reality that 'Christ is God in the Father and

²⁸ Ibid, pp.18-30.

²⁹ Ibid, p 322.

³⁰ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.30.

³¹ Habakkuk ch.2 v.3

Christ would become man in thee,³² the believer fulfilled the nascent reality within him. His interest in the quietism of Jacob Boehme and the inner light of the Quakers developed from this time, though he never lost sight of the application of inward experience to outward life. In G.F. Nuttall's words 'his significance lies in his combination of intense spirituality with social and political concern.'³³ His quietism took him a further step away from his mentor Cradock.

The poem *1654* summarises the fate of the last three parliaments and the disarray arising from the dissolution of 'the third slow parliament.'³⁴ For Llwyd, whilst there may have been confusion in the public mind, ultimately only 'one shall weare the crowne.'³⁵

Aske now what shall be next
the folks have many minds
few can expound this knotty text
so various are these winds.

But this is very plaine
All All must shortly downe
Returning to their dust againe,
& one shall weare the crowne.³⁶

The eschatological time becomes indefinite and activated after death. The poem concludes with the preacher's appeal that seeking God is more important than the minutiae of millennial detail:

people do not mind
nor talk of transient things:
the God eternall seek to find
with strong immortal wings

It matters not at all
How this short world woth go
for everyone must stand or fall
in endless joy or woe.³⁷

³² Ibid. 'Where is Christ?', p.297.

³³ Nuttall, *The Welsh Saints* p.53.

³⁴ Davies (ed.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol. I, pp. 92-93.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

There is little in Llwyd's considerable literary output whether poetry, prose, or correspondence, which shows how he functioned as a pastor. Unlike Philip Henry he was not a diarist, so the daily routines of pastoral work are not recorded. A.N. Palmer quoted a lengthy eulogy on Morgan Llwyd from an anonymous pamphlet published in 1685 entitled *A Winding Sheet for Mr. Baxter's dead*. The author acknowledges Rees' *History of Nonconformity in Wales* as his source. 'He was extraordinary for his love to his countrymen, to whose soul-services he was entirely devoted...extraordinary for his charity, which was universal, not at all confined to parties or persuasions...and always ready bounty for the poor.'³⁸ Without revealing his source, G.V. Price refers to the depth of his pastoral care during a time of plague in Wrexham in 1648. Tents were erected near King's Mills and Llwyd ministered to the spiritual needs of the occupants. He remained at his post 'when death was round about and loved ones were being taken away.'³⁹ The event itself is recorded in the poem 'Thanksgiving for Wrexham Delivered from Pest.'⁴⁰ Col. John Jones expressed his gratitude to Llwyd in a letter from Ireland dated 19 November 1651 at a time when he thought his wife did not have long to live. 'Yors that came by the last Packet ... much refreshed her spirit, and raised a conceit in her (upon yor expression of dedd Lazarus) that she should recover, saying shee had faith enough to be healed, and pressing earnestly (when she was not able to turne herselfe in her bedde) to be carried into Wales, to see the saints at Wrexham.'⁴¹ We also see pastoral concern expressed in a letter to his mother dated 14 November 1655 'but when you hear within you spiritual travail and pain consider it is a tempest sent from God in love, to winnow the chaff from the grain in the heart, to clear the way for Christ to reign supreme there.'⁴²

However strict his puritanism, Llwyd was open to fellowship with people from a wide variety of Christian viewpoints. In his poem *An Invitation to Differing Brethren* the opening verse gives his grounds for open communion:

With Christ our Lorde we suppe
and every saint comes in
that is desirous with consent

³⁸ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, pp.25-6.

³⁹ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.53.

⁴⁰ Davies (ed.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol 1, pp. 12-14.

⁴¹ Ellis (ed.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol 2, p.291.

⁴² Price. *The Old Meeting*, p.52. Source not indicated.

for to partake therein.

No honest soules kept out
their presence we desire.⁴³

An irony within the poem is his condemnation of those endeavouring to be dissenters and exclusive separatists. Separation was not so much the issue as isolationism.

If any saint dissent
and Separatist bee,
hee may see cause to blame himselfe
and all his brethren free.⁴⁴

Open Communion has always been the position of the Old Meeting from its foundation to the present day, even during the period of tight Calvinism during the ministry of Joseph Jenkins in the later eighteenth century. During 1776 two Independents from Common Hall Lane, Chester sought membership and the church meeting of 21 April decided 'this church having been for many years on the plan of open or mixt communion proposes still to continue it.'⁴⁵

The poem headed *VIII 1648* calls for agreement and unity as he concludes the summer section in verses 44-45:

How far should Christians (by Gods Word)
one with another beare
in differing ways. Resolve but this
and then our haven is neare.

Agree Agree. You sing one song
but differ in the tone
Else Christ or Antichrist will come
and make you run on one.⁴⁶

Difference in emphasis was no ground for neglecting fellowship not only in poetic expression, but in the breadth of his contacts from Vavasor Powell, Walter Cradock and William Erbury, to the Quakers and Richard Baxter, namely the full spectrum of Puritan opinion.

⁴³ Davies (ed.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol. 1, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.199. The issues are considered more fully in chapter 2.

⁴⁶ Davies (ed.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol.1, p.29.

Morgan Llwyd has been described as ‘up to a certain point a Quaker ... his preaching prepared the soil for the seed of truth ... The baptism of Christ is the one great baptism ... the heavenly water in the second birth.’⁴⁷ G.V. Price refers to the old small freehold at the top of the Cefn Stone Quarries which was known as Pen y Cefn Christionydd, which had been the home of John ap John, a local youth, who was about sixteen when he joined The Old Meeting.⁴⁸ Some time later he was one of two delegates Morgan Llwyd sent to meet George Fox when Llwyd was moving from millenarianism towards a more inward spirituality. The literary critic M. Wynn Thomas refers to what Tudur Jones has called ‘the inward journey’, that is the great existential experience of faith.⁴⁹ G.V. Price quotes an entry from George Fox’s journal referring to the visit of Morgan Llwyd’s delegates to Swarthmore.

And there was a priest at Rexam in Wales one ffloyde, he sent two of his preachers into the North to try us & see what manner of people hee was: but they were convinced both...& they staide a time and went backe again, & one of yon stands a finie minister for Christ to this day, one John appe John: but the other did not continue.⁵⁰

So John ap John returned as a Quaker and converted many ‘to the peculiar tenets of Fox and his disciples.’⁵¹ A Quaker meeting house was established at a farmhouse in Cefn Bychan, but the society diminished because of the numbers emigrating to Pennsylvania. When they relinquished the meeting house the Baptist community was invited to take over the premises and it became a Welsh-speaking chapel. The upper room became the meeting place, while one of their members lived downstairs and used the land as a small-holding.

Thomas Richards suggested that Morgan Llwyd never intended his two delegates to be ‘anything more than a journey of curiosity to be completed by an academic inquisition.’⁵² He wondered whether he was preoccupied with composing *Llyfr y Tri Aderyn* which contains cryptic phrases relating to what he must have heard about

⁴⁷ T.M. Rees, *History of the Quakers in Wales and their emigration to North America* (Carmarthen: W. Spurrell and Son, 1925), pp. 8-9.

⁴⁸ G.V. Price, ‘Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District’, Unpublished MS (1964), Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, p.6.

⁴⁹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Writers of Wales ‘Morgan Llwyd’* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1984) p. 60.

⁵⁰ J.L. Nickalls (ed), *Journal of George Fox* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p.192.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² T. Richards, *Religious Developments in Wales 1654-1662* (London: National Eisteddfod Assoc., 1923), p. 243.

Quaker activity in the north 'goleuni newydd',[a new light] 'dysceidiaeth ddwfwfn ddiarth ddyrus'[a deep, perplexing unfamiliar doctrine]⁵³ and especially 'mudion a byddariaid yn malu ewyn, yn llygadyntnu ac yn synnu'r gwirion',[the deaf and dumb foaming at the mouth, bewitching and surprising the simpletons.]⁵⁴

The following year, 1654, George Fox sent two of his missionaries to North Wales, John Lawson of Lancaster and Richard Hubbersthorpe of Yealand. They visited the church in Wrexham towards the end of their tour, but 'their zeal outran their charity.'

⁵⁵ They judged the congregation severely saying the so called saints lived in pride, envy and covetousness. Morgan Llwyd apparently sat sobbing under the condemnation of Hubbersthorpe.⁵⁶ Richards doubted whether Morgan Llwyd was the sobbing minister as the records show more than one minister was present, adding 'his immensely receptive mind which made him the greatest exponent in Wales of German mysticism was not slow to appreciate the points of spiritual contact between this and the new gospel of Fox.'⁵⁷ Richards then demonstrated what he called Morgan Llwyd's 'mental oscillation' between classic puritanism and the rise of experiential teachings of Boehme and Fox with quotations from *Where is Christ?* and *Lazarus and his two Sisters*.⁵⁸ In correspondence with Richard Baxter, Morgan Llwyd asked why he was so critical of Quakerism. In a letter of October 1656 he wrote 'neither shall men agree in God, till the fleshly mind....be mortified, (And in that the Quakers say well as I thinke)'.⁵⁹ Thomas Richards asserted Morgan Llwyd 'later admitted that a large part of the truth lay with the Quakers.'⁶⁰ D.R. Thomas referred to him as a mystic with Quaker sympathies.⁶¹

Morgan Llwyd was a radical thinker who gave Dissent a strong foundation not only through his presence in Wrexham, but further afield, by expressing the passionate conviction of his commentary on contemporary events as an accomplished writer. M.

⁵³ *Geithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol.1, p.250.

⁵⁴ *Ibid* p.263.

⁵⁵ Rees, *History of the Quakers in Wales and their emigration to North America*, p.10.

⁵⁶ Price, 'Servants of God; History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p.7 .

⁵⁷ Richards, *Religious Developments in Wales*, p. 244.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.245.

⁵⁹ Elliss (ed.), *Geithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol.2, p. 274.

⁶⁰ Richards, *History of the Puritan Movement in Wales*, p.218.

⁶¹ Thomas, *History of the Diocese of St. Asaph*, p.110, footnote 20.

Wynn Thomas lists his poetry under six main categories,⁶² all of which contain a frequent use of analogy. Sometimes it is with the natural world such as winter, spring and summer, but the most frequent analogies are biblical. They might be in the title as in *Some Select Verses of the Song of Songs*, or the *Churches Hymne after Breaking Bread*. There is a good example in the *The English triumph over Scottish traitors* with references to Joshua girding on his sword, 'Josiah that reforms,'⁶³ and 'These yong weake Davids in his name, with great Goliaths strive'.⁶⁴ In *The Third Trumpet*, or *Last Alliance* there are references to the lions den, Gideon, Samson, Jephah, Jair, Ammon, and near the end of the poem to Marah.⁶⁵ *Canticle XXX*⁶⁶ is a short inward spiritual tour of biblical places: the mount of Olives, Sinai, Sion, Gilboa, Nebo, and Salem. The poem commemorating Wrexham is written within the analagous setting of *A song of my beloved concerning his vineyard*.⁶⁷ In *Wrexham Christ had a vineyard* written in 1652 reflected fifteen years of blessing, 'full fiteene yeares they had showers and dew from heaven sweet ...' presumably from the initial ministry of Walter Cradock. However now the weeds and thorns have appeared so the second part of the poem becomes a lament:

But now the bryers are come up
and thorns and thistles tall
therefore with Christ they do not sup
in ordinances all.⁶⁸

Of all Morgan Llwyd's English writings his prose most clearly illustrates the inward development of his theology. *Where is Christ?* explores Christological speculation with pastoral sensitivity. Is Christ in heaven, or solely identified through the church? Is he now a spirit? Is he within believers? Is he present or distant? The questions posit uncertainty, 'the assembly is divided.'⁶⁹ After mourning the 'ignorance and unacquaintance of precious souls with the Saviours person,'⁷⁰ he builds his argument for the supremacy of Christ from creation which itself depends on Christ's supremacy, as does the Godhead. If Christ were not victorious 'all would be soon

⁶² M. Wynn Thomas, *Writers of Wales Morgan Llwyd*, p. 20.

⁶³ Davies (ed.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol. I, p.49.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp 53-4.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.63.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.88.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.89.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.297.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.298.

overturned or swallowed up by the malignant powers.’⁷¹ Christ’s presence, power, and purpose are infinite, and he is not to be limited to his sacrificial death, or any other single aspect of his work and person. To do so would ‘seek to starve him in thy pinfold ...he is higher than the heavens ... deeper than Hell ... broader than the earth.’⁷² To this point Morgan Llwyd is reflecting standard puritan convictions, but then begins to express his sense of inwardness. There are many reasons why people do not comprehend the wider framework, and an appreciation of the fullness of Christ comes from recognising how in all things he reflects the wonder of God the Father. More precisely the glories of the Father flow through the Son, ‘all things out of the centre of the essences of the Father are brought to light and being.’⁷³

The development of his theme is reminiscent of Boehme’s analogy of the candle in which the tallow feeds the fire which produces the light, a fact as applicable to humanity as it is to God. Expositions of Scripture must make sure they do not limit the person and work of Christ within the confines of the text and a narrow application. It is all too easy for expositors to ‘set up Christ in their own private way’, and the building of ‘their own narrow pinnacle of opinion’⁷⁴ cannot sustain the weight of the complete superstructure which will consequently collapse around them. The work of Christ must be seen in its entirety from the fall of Adam onwards: ‘it was the real Christ in God that then relieved him’,⁷⁵ and so through the rest of the Old Testament into the New. There has to be a total view, partial carvings up of ‘the Christ without and the Christ within’ only becomes a deceit. Whatever care is given and honour shown to the Bible ‘it is not the God that can save thee.’⁷⁶ Christ is hidden within the outward things and appears through them, so that as Christ is revealed in the reading of Scripture the believer discovers more experientially than intellectually that ‘Christ is God in the Father, and Christ would become man in thee.’⁷⁷

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 299.

⁷² Ibid, p. 300.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 302.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 304.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 305.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 306.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 307.

The presence of Christ is discovered through the personal relationship, ‘Christ to me and I to him.’⁷⁸ Christ is to be found ‘where he is to be found for ever, and that is within thy heart.’⁷⁹ The inward Christ brings the blessings of God to bear on heart and life. To look on Christ is to be ‘melted daily into his eternal love.’⁸⁰ It is not to be smothered but nurtured within. It is not to be abused or doubted. The abiding presence of the glory of Christ is an inward reality. Without it God is unknown. The experience of receptive faith is the crucial factor. Without that ‘the wisest naturalist cannot as much perceive this holy thing of God what he is.’⁸¹ The location of Christ is an inward reality in the receiving and following of the one who fills the universe with the love of God.

In *Lazarus And His Three Sisters* written in 1655, the title follows the contemporary pattern of having a much longer sub-title which seeks to explain the nature of the work. With Lazarus and his sisters there are two inbuilt explanations. The first is ‘difcourfing of paradise’ and the second is offered almost as an alternative title: ‘A Conference about the excellent things of the other World.’⁸² The work has an imaginative presentation, and in modern parlance could be presented as a drama for three voices. The conversation begins with Mary asking what it was like on the other side. ‘Tell me somewhat of heaven and happiness, and of the world to come ...’⁸³ The immediate reply is qualified by Lazarus telling his sister how he has one perspective having been restored to life, but those who remain dead may have a different perspective altogether. He was restored to bear witness ‘against the whole world of unbelievers and Atheists.’⁸⁴ Lazarus tells Mary the journey of the soul is not via the physical senses but the roots, like a tree in winter: an early indication that the journey is not to some ethereal outer reaches, but underground to the innermost soul.

Llwyd’s Protestantism comes to the fore in Lazarus’ comment ‘proud Prelates (falsely called Saints.)’⁸⁵ There are those who do not consider that ‘God in heaven or Satan in hell is in them.’⁸⁶ Martha comes into the conversation by asking about purgatory.

78 Ibid.
 79 Ibid.
 80 Ibid.
 81 Ibid, p. 308.
 82 Ibid, p. 271.
 83 Ibid.
 84 Ibid, p.272.
 85 Ibid, p.275.

Lazarus' reply evades a direct answer as he speaks of the repentant thief being in paradise, 'which is the Kingdom of Christ, the fifth monarch'.⁸⁷ Paradise comes first 'in the last days'⁸⁸ before the kingdom is handed to the Father who becomes all in all. At this point Morgan Llwyd is reflecting pre-millennialism. Lazarus defines paradise, when Martha asks what is it like, by comparing it with Eden and as a 'pleasure and private rest in God.'⁸⁹ However it is always near, and he develops his sense of inwardness as he interprets the busy fretting of Martha as an outward expression of her inner unease. He graphically presents it as a pastoral warning, that if you are 'full of dunghill cares and vexations of this world'⁹⁰ you can not see it because you put yourself far from it and exclude it.

In response to Martha's question about who might be fit for paradise Lazarus replies in terms of those who are dead to the world with the world crucified to them. The ones admitted are those who are made ready for it. If Martha were let in as she was her experience would be that of a spiritual dichotomy, being in heaven whilst simultaneously experiencing 'the everlasting burnings.'⁹¹ Lazarus refers to being in the world but not of the world, with a more picturesque metaphor 'let them use the world as though they used it not and pick it as a dry bone.'⁹² Mary intervenes saying how she sat quietly at Jesus feet. Lazarus responds by asking what inwardness has Mary learned. She challenges her brother to prove she is no different from Martha. In response Lazarus challenges Mary to look within her heart. Perfect inner peace can not come until perfection comes. There has to be a war between the inward carnal and spiritual natures. Peace comes when this inner conflict is resolved. 'Such a one hath the inner stillness and bosom of Abraham,'⁹³ which is portrayed as an inward spiritual reality.

The reply to the final question whether Lazarus is subjected to sin in a manner that was not possible whilst in paradise produces a dramatic reply in contrast to the Calvinistic teaching of the ongoing conflict within the soul that is not finally resolved

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.276.
⁸⁷ Ibid, p.279.
⁸⁸ Ibid.
⁸⁹ Ibid.
⁹⁰ Ibid.
⁹¹ Ibid.
⁹² Ibid, p.281.
⁹³ Ibid.

until the gates of paradise are reached. 'My life which is Christ in me, is not subject to sin: and besides this, that my life is become Lord and Governor of my whole man, soul, spirit, and body and shall put off all Satan's assaults and snares.'⁹⁴ The final statement comes near to the doctrine of entire sanctification as taught by the holiness movement of the later twentieth century as a logical extension of Wesleyan teaching on holiness. Morgan Llwyd does not present inward domination over sin in the specific terms of a second blessing, but his sense of reaching inwardly to find the human root in the root of God seems to come near to anticipating later holiness movement teaching about dealing with the remaining root of inward sin.

The conversation is an inventive tool for pastoral teaching. It is quite different from the traditional puritan style of presenting Christian teaching and doctrine as an objective application of systematic theology in a didactic sermon. Together with *An Honest Discourse among Three Neighbours*, it is a precursor of John Bunyan's narrative style in *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

Three Neighbours relates to Morgan Llwyd's millennial period. It serves as a forum for considering Vavasor Powell's criticisms of Cromwell in *A Word for God*, and becomes an eschatological consideration of the state of the Protectorate. M. Wynn Thomas succinctly summarized the discussion by outlining two inter-connected debates. The first is between a Protestant theocracy ruled by saints and those who believed that saints represented an arrogant and spiritual monopoly. The second is between those opposed to Cromwell who were invoking the rights and liberties of the individual and those such as Morgan Llwyd, who believed Christians must obey all legally constituted authority.⁹⁵ He drifts away from millennialism and would leave the kingdom of God to God taking up the paradox of the prophet that carries but carries not. He opts not for Ichabod the Fifth Monarchist, but Issachar the Impartialist.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.293.

⁹⁵ M. Wynn Thomas, *Writers of Wales 'Morgan Llwyd'*, p.14.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.15.

In the conclusion of the matter Goodman Past has the last word having seen it all before. ‘The answer is of old, do as ye would be done unto.’⁹⁷ The exhortation goes to each category of conviction whether Romish people, lax Protestants and Cavaliers, Levellers, or honest church members, ‘to follow (and first know) the uttermost light given, and then a door of peace, power, perfection and unity will be opened to you in due time.’⁹⁸ Cromwell, he claims, must examine his heart and purposes. All the sects ‘have some pieces of the Truth.’⁹⁹ In its contemporary context such a view was revolutionary, and as shared with the Quakers, unique in an age when every other grouping had an attitude of right towards themselves and wrong towards others. ‘Rulers, look no more too much out at your windows upon Time ...but look in upon Eternity in your own chamber that ye may come to the ground of all things, and of yourselves.’¹⁰⁰ For Morgan Llwyd as for the Quakers, it was the cultivation of the divine spark within that reflected the divine light of God at large within the universe.

In *Llyfr y Tri Aderyn* there appears to be some disagreement about the identification of the types. For M. Wynn Thomas the flood is the fate of the unredeemed. The ark represents salvation, but in terms of Christ rather than the church. The raven symbolises those outside the ark whether Anglicans or sectarians. The dove stands for the Holy Spirit and the new man in whom the Holy Spirit is manifest. The dialogue between the eagle and the dove is described as a ‘sophisticated catechism: it instructs the reader in the questions and answers that constitute the fundamental attributes of true faith.’¹⁰¹ On the other hand, T.M. Rees identified the eagle as Cromwell, the raven as the Cavaliers, and the dove as the Puritans.¹⁰² A variation in identity made by S.K. Roberts casts the raven as formalism in religion, the dove as the true gathered church and the eagle as state power or the magistrates from whom the true church can expect protection.¹⁰³ These, however, are only minor variations and do not alter the overall theme.

Morgan Llwyd died prematurely in 1659 aged forty. For the Old Meeting he was the founding pillar, a colossus overshadowing those who followed as pastor. John Evans,

⁹⁷ Ellis (ed.), *Gweithiau Morgan Llwyd*, Vol.2, p.237.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 238.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 239.

¹⁰¹ M. Wynn Thomas, *Writers of Wales 'Morgan Llwyd'*, p.29.

¹⁰² Rees, *History of the Quakers in Wales and their emigration to North America*, p.9.

¹⁰³ S.K. Roberts, ‘Llwyd Morgan’, p.178.

Evan Jenkins, and David Jones were important figures who set significant milestones in the development of the cause. It can be argued Joseph Jenkins was the second most influential pastor in the church's history, but Morgan Llwyd's inventive imagination was head and shoulders above the conventional Calvinism of the times and its sometimes niggardly narrow-mindedness. Nobody in the long history of the cause, or the wider district, matches Morgan Llwyd's breadth of vision, and theological imagination. Despite his unease with Presbyterianism the magnanimity of his spirit permeated the evolution of the Old Meeting into Chester Street Baptist church which, despite its many controversies and disputes, has maintained an openness of spirit and generosity of outlook.

The restoration period

The local events within north east Wales need to be set within the context of the parliamentary legislation which was intended to restrain both dissent and Roman Catholicism. The twelve years which followed the restoration were difficult as the measures of the Clarendon Code took effect. The Corporation Act of 1661 required municipal officials to take Anglican communion thus excluding dissenters from public office. The Act of Uniformity of 1661 enforced the use of the Book of Common Prayer and as a consequence over two thousand clergy were forced to resign their livings in what became known as the Ejection. The Conventicle Act of 1664, as a means of suppressing dissent, forbade religious gatherings of more than five people who were not members of the same household. The Five Mile Act of 1665 forbade nonconformist ministers to come within five miles of their previous livings. It also prevented them from teaching in schools. The days of puritan triumph during the inter-regnum were long gone. However despite such legislation dissent struggled into a position from which it could not be dislodged. Following the Toleration Act of 1689 which granted dissenters freedom to worship within their own churches and appoint their own ministers,¹⁰⁴ they emerged from the shadows and hiding places into which they had crept for survival and gradually began to stand their corner staking their claim to be heard, albeit as second class citizens in the eyes of the state and many of High Church persuasion.

¹⁰⁴ See section on The Restoration and the riots of 1715, pp. 59-63.

During this period from 1667-1700 under the ministry of John Evans, the Old Meeting came into its own as a clearly recognised nonconformist cause. It was not yet a Baptist church, remaining a mixture of Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists. A.H. Dodd's portrayal of Wrexham at the Restoration is one in which the old gentry, the old established church, and the old administrative machinery were restored. However things could never be quite the same. Many of the old order were in reduced circumstances having mortgaged their properties to pay for repairs or to meet fines imposed by parliament.¹⁰⁵ Between the death of Morgan Llwyd in 1659 and the appointment of John Evans in 1667, the Old Meeting experienced both persecution and stress due to ecclesiological tension between its Presbyterian and Independent elements. According to A.N. Palmer, the Baptists were a clear minority within the congregation.¹⁰⁶

The consequences of the ministries of Morgan Llwyd and Ambrose Mostyn were not easily eradicated. A substantial remnant of their congregations began to meet in private houses. After 1672 meetings for worship were held at Brynyffynon. John Jones senior had left his home to Major John Manley, which became a centre of nonconformist activity. The younger John Jones, who had been tutored by Morgan Llwyd, allied himself with the nonconformists and was later excommunicated for his allegiance. In making this reference Dodd does not say who carried out the excommunication.¹⁰⁷

Many Presbyterians met secretly for worship and communion 'daring all'.¹⁰⁸ Philip Henry's diary records in detail the difficulties experienced by local dissenters.¹⁰⁹ On 12 June 1664 'Mr. Taylor and many more about Wrexham were bound over to appear at Quarter Sessions for a private meeting at which 'ye were deprehended.'¹¹⁰ On 14 August 1664 he records the death of Mr. George Bostock J.P. of Holt with the comment:

His death occasioned by a surfet of drink which hee took at ye time of ye

¹⁰⁵ Dodd, *History of Wrexham*, p.67.

¹⁰⁶ Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.44.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.70.

¹⁰⁸ Palmer. *History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.43.

¹⁰⁹ Philip Henry's influence is considered more fully in the next section.

¹¹⁰ Palmer. *History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.43, quoting M.H. Lee (ed.) *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, (London: K. Paul, Trench, 1882), p.157.

quarter sessions at Llanrwst, whither he had bound over certain of ye inhabitants in and about Wrexham, who were deprehended at ye meeting to their no small trouble. And now just before ye Assize ye Lord took him away by a remarkable stroke, for verily Hee is a God yt judgeth in the earth: O that man might hear and fear: and Lord goe on to plead ye cause of thy poor suffering people in all the three nations for Jesus' sake.¹¹¹

Towards the end of February 1665 Henry attended a conventicle 'in ye number' (four plus the household),¹¹² leaving the location and names blank for security purposes. Shortly afterwards he attended a meeting in Wrexham, and because were more present than was allowed under the Conventicle Act some had to pay the £5 fine and others went to prison. He recorded that Steele was again 'secured.'¹¹³ Philip Henry with Luke Lloyd and his son were served with a warrant drawn up by 'the Cavalier Hanmers of Hanmer.'¹¹⁴ Having promised in October 1663 to forbear 'under security'¹¹⁵ from attending further meetings, Philip Henry prevaricated expertly stating how he was unable 'to expressly answer, having once or twice of late been present where ye number was exceeded.'¹¹⁶ As Thomas Richards commented, his replies 'can only be taken as illustrations of the Jesuitical subtlety good Puritans had perforce to be guilty of in those difficult days.'¹¹⁷ The promise to forbear related to an alleged plot against the government, 'during ye anger of which I thought in prudence & did forbear.'¹¹⁸ He then argued having kept his promise so far as his own house and home were concerned, his other transgressions were beyond the Flint county boundary, 'to which I might have added that ye promise as not absolute, for I said if I doe transgress I know ye penalty.'¹¹⁹ He was released having had to pay £20 and promise to live peaceably as a good subject until the following Christmas. Steele was deemed to be a 'dangerous and disaffected person.'¹²⁰ fit only to be presented at the next assizes, as was Luke Lloyd junior for accusing the new vicar of Worthenbury of being a liar, 'and that by the communion table just after the administration of the

111 Ibid, p.159.

112 Ibid, pp. 178-9.

113 Ibid.

114 Richards, *Wales under the Penal Code*, p.8.

115 Lee (ed.), *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, p. 176.

116 Ibid.

117 Richards, *Wales under the Penal Code*, p.14.

118 Lee (ed.), *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, p.176.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

sacrament.’¹²¹

Two or three writers mention an incident in 1665 in which a detachment of militia was sent to Brynyffynon to break up a meeting of eighty to one hundred dissenters. Major Marley parleyed with the soldiers at the front door allowing many to escape through the rear entrances. Nonetheless twenty-one were arrested and fined £5 each, whilst others were sent to gaol. Philip Henry wrote ‘Feb 25, 1665. A meeting at Wrexham suprised, Sabb day was sennight, some payd 5lb, some went to prison for three months, accord. the Act. Lord let ye libertyes of thy people be precious in Thy sight.’¹²²

There was also trouble for dissenters beyond Wrexham. At the autumn sessions for Denbighshire in 1663, sixty eight people were presented for non-attendance at church and holding conventicles. Some meetings were held under cover of darkness, as at Rhyddallt, but this ploy was not always successful.¹²³ In 1664 twelve people from Chirk and twenty seven from the Bromfield Division were presented to the Great Sessions as Nonconformists.¹²⁴ At the quarter sessions in 1668, Alexander Powell, yeoman of Dutton y Brain was fined £4-10/-. His kinsman, Sir Thomas Powell was on the bench. His offence was being present at a conventicle held at the house of Uriah Weaver, yeoman, also of Dutton y Brain. At the same sessions, Ellen Roberts, wife of Edward Roberts, a Wrexham tailor, also appeared on the charged of being at a conventicle on 30 June. Her husband saved her from prison by paying the fine of forty shillings.¹²⁵

Thomas Richards cites a case from the Controlment Rolls which name eight people who were indicted and fined for non-attendance at church. They were allowed to appeal within the first fifteen days of the legal Easter term for 1665. Six were from Wrexham: Roger Roberts (gentleman), John Jones (glover), Joseph Owen (felt maker), Henry Jones (smith), Alexander Powell (yeoman), Grace Cooper (widow). The other two were from Holt: Joseph Powell (yeoman) and Margaret Roberts.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid, p.168.

¹²³ Price, ‘Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District’ , p.8.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Palmer, *History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.44.

Richards thinks Margaret Roberts was the wife of Evan Roberts who was a member of Morgan Llwyd's congregation in 1651.¹²⁶ Geoffrey Holmes referred to a 'complex tracery of local variations ... the persecution of dissenters ebbing and flowing like the waters of a tidal estuary.'¹²⁷ Within North East Wales there was more of a deep lake of Royalist and Tory persecution.

Philip Henry and the Presbyterian influence

Philip Henry(1631-1696),¹²⁸ born in London of Welsh parents and educated at Westminster and Christ Church Oxford, became tutor to Judge Puleston's children at Emral in Maelor. Thomas Richards suggested the influence of the Pulestons had a curbing effect on his initial High-Calvinistic views which placed him on the right wing of Presbyterianism. After his ordination in 1657 he brought new life and vitality to 'the rigid frame of classical Presbyterianism'¹²⁹ in what was later known as the Maelor District. Under the 1672 Act of Indulgence friends secured him a licence to hold services in his home and he became the most influential Presbyterian voice in the area. If Morgan Llwyd was the influential radical voice of Independency, Philip Henry was the influential voice of right wing Presbyterianism, as close to Anglicanism as one could get whilst remaining a dissenter. Henry later played a prominent part in the post Restoration debates with Bishop Lloyd of St. Asaph during 1681.

Philip Henry referred to meeting Morgan Llwyd at a preaching meeting at Iscoyd-chappell in 1657,¹³⁰ but whilst their ministries overlapped, his was beginning and Morgan Llwyd died prematurely in 1659. Given that Morgan Llwyd strongly disagreed with Presbyterianism is it mistaken to assume there was a coolness between them? Had there been a warm relationship between them no doubt Philip Henry would have referred to it in the same manner as his references to close Presbyterian friends. His only other reference to Morgan Llwyd is an oblique one to 'fourscore children' who had become ill at 'Swansey'. He heard about it from Capt. Barbour of

¹²⁶ Richards, *Wales under the Penal Code*, p.22.

¹²⁷ G. Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power: late Stuart and early Georgian Britain, 1660-1772*, (London: Longman, 1993), p.147.

¹²⁸ See R.L. Greaves, s.n. 'Henry, Philip', *The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004) Vol.26, pp. 587-91.

¹²⁹ Richards. *Religious Developments in Wales*, p. 166.

¹³⁰ Lee (ed.), *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, p. 55.

Wrexham, and 'hee had it from Mr. Morgan Lloyd'.¹³¹

Philip Henry's considerable influence in the district had an effect on the development of the Old Meeting particularly when there was no key Independent figure between the death of Morgan Llwyd in 1659 and the arrival of John Evans in 1667. There are no further direct references to the Old Meeting, but a couple of diary entries mention meetings in John Hughes' house. 'July 3rd 1672. I preached at Wrexham at Mr. Hugh's house, having first show'd both his licence and mine to the Justices who endors'd their names on the backside.'¹³² Four weeks later on 'July 31 1672, I preacht the second lecture at Wrexham at John Hugh's house. Luke 17:26, &c. security and sensuality like to bee raining in Gospel Times - Lord, awaken people to see it lest the day come upon them at unawares.'¹³³ The entry records the other preacher that day was Mr. Goodwin of Bolton, indicating that puritan geographical connections were extensive.

A.N. Palmer is not sure where John Hughes' house was, but suspects he was a bookseller living in Hope St.¹³⁴ The Independents rented a room at the Talbot Inn: also in Hope Street.¹³⁵ G.V. Price thought it was in Queen St.¹³⁶ Palmer's suggestion that John Evans obtained the Presbyterians' licence as well as the Independents' implies he was ministering to both causes, as perhaps Morgan Llwyd had done between the parish church and the Old Meeting. Despite local historian G.V. Price suggesting otherwise, there is no ultimate proof that there were two distinct meetings from the outset, although it can be clearly ascertained that the Presbyterian element stemmed principally from the work of Ambrose Mostyn who was the recognized Presbyterian vicar of Wrexham, and the influence of Philip Henry,¹³⁷ whilst the Independents were linked with Morgan Llwyd.

Given Morgan Llwyd's antipathy towards Presbyterianism, it is hard to see how the two parties could have fostered an amicable lasting relationship. The traditional view

¹³¹ Ibid, p.58.

¹³² Richards, *Religious Development in Wales*, pp.166-7.

¹³³ Ibid, p.255.

¹³⁴ Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.48.

¹³⁵ Dodd, *History of Wrexham*, p.70.

¹³⁶ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.116.

¹³⁷ Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.45.

expressed by G.V. Price suggests the Presbyterians had a fractious relationship with the Independents until they finally left for good in the 1690s to form the New Meeting. It may be a more accurate reflection to suggest that the Presbyterians were a nascent church who attached themselves on the basis of necessity at times of pressure, but from 1691 the Crisp controversy¹³⁸ gave them sufficient reason to establish themselves as a church in their own right. That is a view hinted at by A.H. Dodd: 'the spiritual heirs of Morgan Llwyd remained a permanent and characteristic element but were no longer a united body.'¹³⁹ A.N. Palmer argued that through contemporary persecution, the widely scattered Presbyterians were not able to practise their centralised form of church government and discipline, but 'were driven by force of circumstance'¹⁴⁰ to adopt the Independent system for their separate and disconnected churches. In Palmer's view they were evangelical Calvinists, but in contrast to the Independents were less strict in their interpretations of doctrine, and soon drifted towards Arminianism. Consequently the final split with the Old Meeting included a doctrinal as well as ecclesiological element.

Thomas Richards relates how Philip Henry 'made addresses' for ordination to the nearest Shropshire classis.¹⁴¹ On being asked for his judgment 'in reference to ye controversy betw. Presbyterian and Independent' he replied '...if I had not approved of the Presbyt. Way, I would not have come thither'. He then wrote what seems to be an editorial comment. 'I reply'd, in most things according to my present light I did, but I had not had opportunity to search into ye bottom of ye controver.'¹⁴² There is an entry for 11 March 1663 when he went to Wrexham to sell his mare at the fair and was grieved at what he saw 'of the Presbyterian interest there, which I judge the middle ground between two extremes, is of late eclipsed and clouded' because there was 'want of communion amongst them. & ye cause of that, want of a Faithful Ministry thereabouts to go before them; my spirit was much saddened at ye consideration of it, help lord.'¹⁴³ Besides reflecting a possible ambivalence amongst the Wrexham Presbyterians within the Old Meeting following the short ministries in the early 1660s of Ambrose Mostyn and Ambrose Lewis, Henry's comments suggest his ecclesiology

¹³⁸ For the Crisp controversy see below, pp. 44-8.

¹³⁹ Dodd, *History of Wrexham*, p.74.

¹⁴⁰ Palmer, *History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.50.

¹⁴¹ Richards, *Religious Development in Wales*, pp. 166-7.

¹⁴² Lee (ed.), *Diaries and letters of Philip Henry*, p 36.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 132.

was less accommodating than that of Morgan Llwyd.

His Presbyterian mind-set is seen in a diary entry for a meeting of Presbyterian ministers at Gresford, on 31 August 1657 when he participated in presenting a petition to the coming session of Parliament for the 'setting up of Discipline'. This theme re-appeared five years later when he penned his disapproval of the king's Declaration of Indulgence. 'The reason rendered was, the ineffectualness of rigor for divers yeares & to invite strangers.'¹⁴⁴ He commented 'a thing diversly resented, as interest leads them'.¹⁴⁵ It meant people could worship how and where they wished: a sentiment not popular amongst regimented and disciplined Presbyterians. His assessment of the Declaration of Indulgence was that 'the Conformists generally displeas'd at it, the Presb. glad, the Independents very glad, the Papists triumph.'¹⁴⁶ His fear was 'the danger is, lest ye allowing of separate places help to overthrow our Parish-order which God hath own'd, & beget divisions & animosities amongst us which no honest heart but would rather should bee heal'd.'¹⁴⁷ Twenty-one years later on 28 December 1678 he reviewed his ecclesiology in a further diary entry. 'I doe not conform to the liturgy &c. as a Min'r to read it that I may bear my testimony against prelacy'.¹⁴⁸ He deemed conformity and Independency to be 'by paths ... and the truth between them.'¹⁴⁹

There were three reasons why he did 'not like the Independent way'¹⁵⁰ which militated against Presbyterian order and tidiness. '1. They unchurch the nation. 2. That they pluck up the hedge of Parish order. 3. That they throw the Ministry common and allow persons to preach who are unordayned.'¹⁵¹ However he did like the Independents' maintenance of discipline, and their innate sense of fellowship: 'they love and correspond with one another.'¹⁵² Henry made a private confession to his diary that if he were an Independent 'I must be an Anabaptist, for if baptism bee he door into the Christian-church & I am no church-member till I embody that way,

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 58.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.250.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 277.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

then I must come in by that door.’¹⁵³ That is an interesting comment given the Independents practiced an infant baptism based on covenant theology that would have been in accord with Presbyterian practice.

For Philip Henry church unity came from supervised organisation, rather than Morgan Llwyd’s concept of a looser association of like-minded believers whatever their affiliation. In his view the way forward was ‘for those in place to admit ye sober non-conf. to preach occasionally in their pulpits.’¹⁵⁴ Such a strategy would over time ‘wear off praejudices’¹⁵⁵ and provide a united front against the real enemy ‘ye Papists, who will fish best in troubled waters.’¹⁵⁶ He had a three-fold problem: ‘a Trilemma.’¹⁵⁷ The choices were firstly to turn ‘flat Independents,’¹⁵⁸ secondly to ‘strike in with ye conformists.’¹⁵⁹ or thirdly, to sit and suffer in silence ‘till the lord shall open a more effectual door.’¹⁶⁰ He chose the third option. To conform would be one step too far.

Further direct Presbyterian influence in the Old Meeting had also come briefly from Ambrose Mostyn who in 1659 succeeded Morgan Llwyd at the parish church. He was ejected in 1662 and left Wrexham the following year. Joseph Jenkins, possibly the most influential minister of The Old Meeting during the eighteenth century, wrote in 1773:

after the restoration of King Charles II Mr. Ambrose Mostyn was ejected from the Parish Church for nonconformity to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England and with his people met as often as the times permitted in the part of a house now turned into an Inn, and known by the name of the Red Lion.¹⁶¹

The entry confirms the Presbyterians’ vacillating relationship with the Old Meeting until they left to form the New Meeting during the 1690s as a consequence of the Crisp controversy. Whilst he made an important contribution to the Presbyterian elements of Wrexham area dissent, far less material is related to Mostyn in

153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
161 Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.95.

comparison with Morgan Llwyd whose influence became a lasting legacy for the Independent and Baptist elements within the Old Meeting.

Ambrose Lewis, a candidate for ministry when the Act of Uniformity was passed, was a friend of Philip Henry. A.H. Dodd states that after the Restoration he conformed but by 1681 he was ‘hobnobbing with old Presbyterian friends’¹⁶² and soon rejoined them. Later he was accused of undermining the principles of his pupils, and brought before Judge Jeffreys at Chester Assize who let him off with a scolding for bringing lads up ‘with the tang of fanaticism on their nostrils and they will never leave it.’¹⁶³ ‘Like most Presbyterians’¹⁶⁴ he conformed and had his children baptised at the parish church. The previous bishop of St. Asaph, Dr. George Griffith, was his friend who was able to licence him to continue as a schoolmaster at the Wrexham grammar school. A.N. Palmer added to the detail about hobnobbing with Presbyterians. Apparently a letter Ambrose Lewis had written to a friend about belonging to a Monday evening prayer meeting ‘for the Church and nation’¹⁶⁵ had been intercepted.¹⁶⁶ This ‘harmless design was thereupon magnified into a plot.’¹⁶⁷ and he appeared again before Judge Jeffreys at the Chester assize. Palmer suggests Judge Jefferys may have been a former pupil,¹⁶⁸ and wonders whether that was why Ambrose Lewis only got a scolding. He had the potential to be minister for the Old Meeting but his decision to conform ruled him out. Thomas Richards referred to him as the ‘foremost Puritan schoolmaster in Wales ... Philip Henry’s ‘ancient friend ... is coadjutor in the monthly exercises at Worthenbury, who spiritually refreshed him on a visit in June 1661.’¹⁶⁹ According to Archdeacon Thomas, by 1662 he had become a conformist.¹⁷⁰

John Evans: a unifying influence

John Evans (1628-1700) became minister of the Old Meeting in 1667. His father and

¹⁶² Dodd, *History of Wrexham*, p.72.

¹⁶³ Palmer, *History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.37.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Richards, *Religious Developments in Wales*, p.486.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid quoting Thomas, *History of the Diocese of St. Asaph*, p.855.

grandfather had been rectors at Penygoes near Machynlleth.¹⁷¹ He was secretly ordained on 28 November 1648 by Roger Mainwaring, the deprived Bishop of St. Davids.¹⁷² Not long after his ordination, to the chagrin of his father, he altered his views regarding conformity and was admitted as one of the itinerant preachers of Wales. From 1648-57 he was the master of the free school at Dogellau and also served as a peripatetic preacher under the Act for the Propagation of The Gospel in Wales. In 1657 he was recommended by Oliver Cromwell to be master of Oswestry school. After the Act of Uniformity he was compelled to relinquish the post and obliged to hide wherever he could although continuing to hold secret meetings in the Wrexham area. He was forced to sell part of his library to maintain himself and his family.¹⁷³

The effectiveness of the Restoration backlash is evidenced in a comment about Wrexham in the episcopal returns for St. Asaph diocese. 'In this parish are schismatics many, but all, or most of them of ordinary condition.'¹⁷⁴ In the words of A.N. Palmer 'under the stress of the penal laws many of the wealthier Puritans ostensibly conformed.'¹⁷⁵ After the Clarendon Code¹⁷⁶ the pressure to conform was understandable. In contrast, and without giving either the date or his source, G.V. Price refers to a letter written by Sir George Shakerley from Chester Castle stating that through the efforts of the new licensed teachers 'their assemblies are already grown so full that our Episcopal congregations look very thin.'¹⁷⁷

John Evans' appointment closed an uncertain period for the Old Meeting following the death of Morgan Llwyd in 1659 and the departure of Ambrose Mostyn around 1661. He managed to draw the Presbyterians and Independents (including the Baptists) together as one congregation confirming the assumption that they had been meeting separately. They met jointly in part of a large house called The Red Lion, and sometimes at Brynyffynon where John Evans lived and kept a school to eke out

¹⁷¹ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.115.

¹⁷² See A.H. Dodd, s.n. 'Evans, John', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (London: Hon. Soc. of Cymmrodorion, 1959), p.289.

¹⁷³ Palmer. *History of The Older Nonconformity in Wrexham*, p.96, quoting Samuel Palmer, *Nonconformists' Memorial*, no page no. given.

¹⁷⁴ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.116 quoting Lambeth Palace lib. Codices Tensoniani Vol 639.

¹⁷⁵ Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity in Wrexham*, p.47.

¹⁷⁶ See p. 30.

¹⁷⁷ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.117.

his salary. Henry Maurice, an Independent minister in Breconshire, gave an account of the churches of Wales and their pastors in 1675. Under Denbighshire he wrote:

The first foundation of a gospel ministry here was laid by Mr. Walter Cradock at a town called Wrexham and was afterward gathered into Gospel order by Mr. Morgan Lloyd. Now since their removal and renewal Mr. John Evans, a person of great sobriety and godliness is their Pastor. they were Independents in judgment from the beginning yet are they very moderate, so that some few Baptists are of their society.¹⁷⁸

Were the Presbyterians omitted because he was an Independent? Maurice's statement written three years after Philip Henry's diary entries implied the Presbyterians and Independents met separately with the Baptists being in the minority.

That John Evans was a central figure amongst the dissenters of North East Wales is illustrated by the outcome of what might be called the James Owen affair. Owen was a friend of Philip Henry, and participated with him in the ecclesiological debates with Bishop Lloyd. Tudur Jones referred to him as a Congregationalist who worked closely with Presbyterians.¹⁷⁹ In 1676 he had settled at Swiney near Oswestry as private chaplain to a Mrs Baker. Besides serving a small congregation for twenty years he was instrumental in establishing several congregations in adjacent parts of North Wales. Thomas Rees presents a graphic account of how Owen was ambushed whilst travelling from Chester to Treuddyn and incarcerated in Caerwys gaol.¹⁸⁰ The ordeal ended when 'Mr. John Evans, of Wrexham (the father of the author of *Sermons on the Christian Temper*) sent Mr. Owen's case to an able and eminent lawyer, who gave his opinion that his imprisonment was false and illegal, and that the magistrate who committed him was punishable.'¹⁸¹

Besides holding together the disparate wings within the Old Meeting, John Evans' ministry was notable for the harassment he suffered at the hands of Bishop Lloyd of St. Asaph following his failure to woo him back into the established church. He was approached in 1681 by the newly appointed Bishop Lloyd. 'At that time excommunication and the Statute of Twenty pounds a month was in favour, but the

¹⁷⁸ Palmer, *History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p. 49 & Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.119.

¹⁷⁹ See R.T. Jones, *Congregationalism in Wales*, R. Pope (ed.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 2004), pp.48-60.

¹⁸⁰ Rees, *History of Nonconformity in Wales*, pp.188-92.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.192.

new Bishop thought to take a milder way to work by summoning all sorts of Dissenters to discourse with him, and to seek to persuade them to turn to the Church of England.’¹⁸² He was particularly interested in negotiating with those who had been episcopally ordained prior to becoming dissenters, but not exclusively so given that he was prepared to debate with James Owen in Oswestry, and Dr Thomas Lloyd, physician and Quaker, in Llanfyllin.

The reports from some of Bishop Lloyd’s debates suggest due courtesy was offered, but beneath his surplice the bishop was a hard-liner, as evidenced by his treatment of John Evans after failing to persuade him to conform. The bishop vacillated between conciliation and compulsion. As John Evans and Philip Henry were both episcopally ordained, the question arises as to why he persecuted John Evans but developed a correspondence with Philip Henry. The reason may be that Philip Henry’s Presbyterianism was about as near as one could get to Anglicanism without actually conforming, whereas John Evans stubbornly remained an Independent with antipaedobaptist connections, if not sympathies, during his ministry at the Old Meeting. Referring to ‘the cautious Philip Henry prepared to say a few words from his seat in the chapel when the minister failed to appear one Sunday,’¹⁸³ John Spurr adds ‘Nonconformist clergy of this ilk clearly kept a foot in both camps. As laymen they maintained communion with the national church and as clergymen they exercised their own ministerial gifts in private meetings.’¹⁸⁴ In his early contact Bishop Lloyd offered John Evans the inducement of a good living, but after Evans’ rejection the bishop became vindictive pursuing him through the courts and imposing fines so ‘Mr. Evans was sued to an outlawry’¹⁸⁵ in which he was well protected by his supporters and Lady Eyton of Brynyffynon.¹⁸⁶ G.V Price suggested the victimization and frequent nocturnal escapes impaired his health and developed a loss of memory.¹⁸⁷ Evans is alleged to have remarked ‘It will not be well with me till I am in Heaven.’¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless Samuel Palmer, continuing from Calamy, commented he

¹⁸² Price, *The Old Meeting*, pp.120f.

¹⁸³ J. Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-89* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 136, quoting A.C. Matthews, (ed.), *Calamy Revised* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1934), pp. 401-2, Lee (ed.), *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, p. 133.

¹⁸⁴ Spurr. *English Puritanism 1603-89*, p. 136.

¹⁸⁵ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 121.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ A.J. Johnes, *Nonconformity in North Wales: A series of letters to the Wrexham*

‘kept private assemblies in his house or neighbourhood through most of the hottest times. Some gentlemen of considerable rank sent their sons to board with him for several years because of his learned ability.’¹⁸⁹

A letter from Bishop Lloyd to his friend Henry Phynno written in 1683 concerning the vacancy in Wrexham clearly illustrates his attitude to nonconformists.

I have not been able to satisfy myself in ye choice of a man for so important a Cure; there being as neer as I can guess about 3000 families in yr parish wch have been most of them engaged in ye Schism, & some hundreds of ym continuing obstinately in it ... there are a great number yt stand out very obstinately.¹⁹⁰

Wrexham frustrated him. The vicar, William Smith, was old and by 1682 had been too infirm to attend church for over a year. The bishop complained that the offices were performed by a cheap curate, silly and Scottish, whose ‘mental and moral deficiencies’ were so serious Bishop Lloyd admitted to the archbishop he had made no great effort to dissolve the conventicler. The absentees would not automatically attend the parish church ‘under the particular conditions prevailing,’¹⁹¹ insinuating dissenters preferred poor quality curates in the persecuting church. According to Thomas Rees, Bishop Lloyd ‘is said to have been a good-natured gentleman, and a declared enemy to persecution’¹⁹² despite his treatment of John Evans. On arriving in the diocese the bishop resolved to bring dissenters back into the established church with ‘the cords of a man ... by discourse in which he had a very great felicity, both by his learning and temper.’¹⁹³ It was only afterwards that he resorted to harsher methods.

It can be inferred that his willingness to debate was more on the basis of an interrogating judge examining a suspect rather than a discussion between equals. There was more to it than being caught between the rock of what Thomas Rees called ‘large-hearted humanity’¹⁹⁴ and the hard place of ‘the stubborn strength of

Advertiser by Cambrensi, (Wrexham: Bayley and Bradley), 1878, p. 7.

¹⁸⁹ Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p. 50.

¹⁹⁰ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 121f.

¹⁹¹ Richards, *Wales under the Penal Code*, p. 41.

¹⁹² Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales*, p.206.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

nonconformity.’¹⁹⁵ A letter written by the bishop to Philip Henry indicated the overriding factor was conscience.

No man can pretend conscience for not coming when he is required, to give an account of his religion to them that have authority to demand it by the laws under which he lives, and to hear from their mouths what can be said for the established religion. These are things from which conscience is so far from exempting, that the great rule of conscience requires it, as an indispensable duty, that we should be always ready to *give* an account of the hope that is in us; and that we should hear them that are in *Moses chair, &c.*; and, therefore, those who refuse this, he should consider as men governed, not by conscience, but obstinacy.¹⁹⁶

It is also possible that the underlying motive was revenge. Geraint Jenkins believed the large-hearted humanity of the bishop was questionable. Having discovered that gentle means were insufficient to bend dissenters to his will he pursued a much more vigorous and repressive policy against those ‘bloody wretches’ whose minds and hearts had been ‘horribly poisoned by one Vavasor Powell.’¹⁹⁷

Some consideration should be given to John Evans’ position regarding baptism. In the latter part of his life he appeared to be moving towards a Baptist position. The Baptist historian Joshua Thomas wrote that he was mentioned in contemporary papers as an Independent, but added how he was informed in 1756 by a member of the congregation in Wrexham that Mr. Evans baptised no-one by sprinkling towards the end of his ministry.¹⁹⁸ Joshua Thomas also wrote of how a member of The Old Meeting was perplexed about baptism, doubting whether infant baptism was scriptural until he heard John Evans preach on Jeremiah 6:16 ‘Stand at the crossroads and look for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it.’ The declaration that Christ and his Apostles were at the head of the road convinced him that believer’s baptism was practised by them and he followed suit.¹⁹⁹ If that was so, the question is who did the baptising? The records are silent. A Baptist connection can be made as John Evans’ second wife was Katherine the widow of Vavasor Powell, but the marriage does not indicate whether Evans became a Baptist.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Richards, *Wales under the Penal Code*, p.40.

¹⁹⁷ Jenkins, *Protestant Dissenters in Wales*, p.47.

¹⁹⁸ Quoted in Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 120.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 125.

The establishment of The New Meeting and the role of Thomas Edwards (1649-1700) of Rhual Hall.

Thomas Edwards of Rhual Hall, on the eastern edge of Mold, who became a member of the Old Meeting was also closely associated with the establishment of the New Meeting which came into being through the local Presbyterian reaction to the stance taken by the local supporters of Tobias Crisp amongst whom he was the most vociferous.

That churches disagree on points of doctrine is a fact of life, as are the degrees of disagreement whether respectful, or vitriolic. The split in Wrexham was vitriolic. If the principal reason was a division of opinion about the Crisp controversy, a significant contributory factor was Daniel Williams' attempted manipulation from a distance through the donation of land for the Presbyterians to build their own place of worship.

The Crisp controversy was precipitated in the winter of 1689-90 by the London dissenter Samuel Crisp's republication of his father's sermons from which sparked furious debate regarding the role of old testament law in the life of a Christian. Crisp argued that if Christ alone has satisfied the demands of the law it follows that the way a man behaves is the consequence of salvation and not the way to it, and came under theological attack on the grounds that he was an advocate of antinomianism. E.F. Kevan defined the Antinomians as 'those who maintained that the believer was completely free from all obligation to the law'²⁰⁰ and who believed that 'any concession to legal duty was an infringement of free grace.'²⁰¹

The controversy was inflamed, in part, by Crisp's ambiguity of language. Ivimey had written 'His friends admitted his use of incautious language, but maintained his orthodoxy.'²⁰² Kevan summarised the aim of moderate Antinomianism as a failure to understand the true relationship between 'law' and 'grace' in that they 'extolled the

²⁰⁰ E.F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, (London: Carey Kingsgate press, 1964), p.22.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Quoted in A. Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection: A Review (1690-92) of Presbyterian & Congregational Nonconformity in England & Wales* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1917), p.235.

latter at the expense of the former.²⁰³ Richard Baxter became a principal opponent of Crisp. His experiences in church life and theological debate had brought him to the point where he 'sought a middle way'²⁰⁴ between Arminianism and Calvinism arguing for a process of justification involving human cooperation with grace. This became recognized in his lifetime as 'constituting a distinctively Baxterian position.'²⁰⁵ For Baxter's critics the term denoted confused thinking and became the epicentre for furious pamphleteering.

E.F. Kevan placed much of the problem of antinomianism at the door of etymology in relation to the historical usage of the terms justification and sanctification which the participants in the controversy were unable to clearly distinguish.²⁰⁶ He cited Richard Baxter who claimed, following Augustine, that in some periods in the history of Christian doctrine sanctification has been taken to include all the experiences of the grace of God, including regeneration or justification.²⁰⁷

Repercussions of the controversy are evidenced in the polemical link between Thomas Edwards and the London Congregationalist Isaac Chauncy in which both men regarded Richard Baxter and Daniel Williams as the theological enemy. The debate within North East Wales was initiated through the writings of Wrexham born Daniel Williams who had adopted Baxter's approach. He entered the fray in 1692 with the publication of *Gospel Truth Stated* in which he reduced 'the Controversy into the Compass of a few Heads, and distinctly stating Truth and Error under each of them.'²⁰⁸ Thomas Edwards eventually made a vociferous response in 1699 in *Baxterianism Barfac'd*. Edwards had also corresponded with Isaac Chauncy, who had denounced Williams as a 'grand assertor of a new law' in *Neonomianism Unmask'd* (3 parts, 1692-3) and *A Rejoynder to Mr. D. Williams* (1693).

Although it was 1699 before *Baxterianism Barefac'd* was published, it is clear from the correspondence between Edwards and Isaac Chauncy that the Crisp controversy

²⁰³ Kevan, *The Grace of Law* p.24.

²⁰⁴ N.H. Keeble, s.n. 'Baxter, Richard' *The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol 4 (2004), p.431.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, p.24.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, pp.94-5, footnote 130.

²⁰⁸ D. L. Wykes, 'Williams, Daniel (c.1643-1716)', *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.58, 2004, p.973.

was their prime topic. References to *Baxterianism Barefac'd* suggest that it was in preparation for some time prior to the publication date. If the attitude displayed in the book was expressed within the Old Meeting it is hardly surprising that the Presbyterian element became convinced their only option was to withdraw. In his description of Thomas Edwards' contribution to the Crisp controversy, A.N. Palmer is direct, 'The offensiveness of tone indulged in this book (*Baxterianism Barefac'd*) towards those who swerved in any degree from the strait paths of orthodox Calvinism is very marked. Richard Baxter, and Daniel Williams are especially singled out for the author's spleen.'²⁰⁹ Palmer commented that *Baxterianism Barefac'd* is 'now absolutely unreadable'²¹⁰ though he claimed a sentence or two later that it is 'an able and well-written book.'²¹¹ The following statement from *Baxterianism Barefac'd* makes the point:

The following treatise is not so much of the direct nature of a Controversy, whatever like it may fall in, or within compass of the same, as it is literally, by way of Quotation, expressive of the distinct judgments of several perswasions, and that about the main Salvation Points of the Christian Religion....which when thou hast perused, thou art at full liberty to make thy discriminative choice of either of them, and this we must all certainly do sooner or later: for there is not in the least any Medium between them; but Life entirely or Death entirely.....and that both spiritual and eternal are held forth disjunctively or unmixedly, i.e., not partly life, and partly death, either in the one way or the other.²¹²

G.V. Price sought to excuse the virulence of Thomas Edwards' polemic, 'The tone towards those who were not orthodox Calvinists is somewhat offensive, but his honesty, conscientiousness and well-meaning is beyond doubt.'²¹³

Nonetheless, it is a reasonable assumption that any expression of Thomas Edwards' opinions would have been catalytic, although E.F. Kevan's reference to being 'in accordance with the pattern of seventeenth century intolerance'²¹⁴ normalizes the general vindictiveness by giving it a cultural context. R.T. Jenkins wrote, with reference to Daniel Williams, 'it should be noted that one of the effects in Wales of

²⁰⁹ Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.53, footnote 16.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Thomas Edwards, *Baxterianism Barefac'd* (London: W.Marshall, 1699), quoted in G.V. Price, 'Thomas Edwards of Rhual', unpublished MS (1959), Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, p.114f.,

²¹³ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.91.

²¹⁴ Kevan. *The Grace of Law*, p.32.

his quarrel with the higher Calvinism was a split in the celebrated old congregation of Wrexham. Angered by the attacks of Thomas Edwards, Rhual, on Daniel Williams, the Wrexham Presbyterians left the congregation, and founded the New Meeting; Daniel Williams built them a chapel in Chester Street'.²¹⁵ Although as A.N. Palmer has shown, the land was first offered in 1687.²¹⁶

Thomas Edwards was nothing if not a controversialist. Whilst his consistently hard line conservative position in the Crisp controversy may well have persuaded some of the more open-minded Presbyterians to leave, his baptism 'by plunging'²¹⁷ might also have encouraged their exit given the combative nature of his personality. In a letter to Thomas Edwards dated 15 October 1695, Chauncy refers to a gentleman who called to discuss Edwards' manuscripts and asked 'with great concern if it was true that the recipient had turned Anabaptist.'²¹⁸ Chauncy hoped that it was not true because 'if he had any scruples of that nature lying vpon him he would have acquainted me with them.'²¹⁹ He asked Edwards to let him know whether 'this report be true or a foul slander raised upon you by Neonom: who I am confident will greatly rejoice if this be so.'²²⁰ Edwards replied in a letter dated 30 January 1695 defending adult baptism and stating with 'for these and many other reasons it is that I was baptized by plunging upon ye 4th September last.'²²¹ He added, however, 'it is a foul slander to call him an Anabaptist.'²²² Chauncy responded on 26 March 1696 with a defence of infant baptism.

There is no reason to suppose that Thomas Edwards' father was a dissenter, 'but there is no doubt whatever about his wife being a Dissenter.'²²³ Her husband died in 1664, and Rhual became 'a home and refuge for Baptists.'²²⁴ G.V. Price assumed that Elisabeth Edwards was a member of the Wrexham gathered church.²²⁵ By using the phrase 'the Wrexham gathered church,' Price appears to recognize it was not yet a

²¹⁵ R.J. Jenkins, s.n. 'Williams, Daniel', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, p.10629.

²¹⁶ A.N. Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.54.

²¹⁷ Rhual MSS D/HE/514, Flintshire Records Office.

²¹⁸ Rhual MSS D/HE/513, Flintshire Records Office.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Rhual MSS D/HE/514, Flintshire Records Office.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Price, 'Thomas Edwards of Rhual', Wrexham, p.9.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid, p.7.

Baptist church. It is possible Price made the Baptist connection because Vavasor Powell frequently visited Rhual. Basil Heaton, the present owner of Rhual Hall, records that Thomas Edwards followed his mother's practice of inviting renowned preachers to Rhual. This included giving sanctuary to John Williams, a dissenting minister from Denbigh who had been banished in 1685 by the Five Mile Act. This was the John Williams who became minister at the Old Meeting in 1712 and died at Rhual on 5 October 1725.²²⁶ Heaton mentions an inventory of furniture made in 1738 which refers to John Williams' room.²²⁷ Thomas Edwards, who had been appointed High Sheriff for Flintshire in 1681, must have recognised the irony of a high sheriff giving sanctuary to a dissenter.

Thomas Edwards was baptized at Rhual in 1694 aged forty-six. As the baptistery was completed at some date before this, it has to be asked whether his position had evolved through the years or, whether by 1694, he considered it safe to be recognized as a committed Baptist. As early as 1681 his brother in law Mytton Davies, who was also M.P. for Flint, had written warning him that Charles II was sanctioning the persecution of dissenters, but he chose to ignore it and 'continued his Nonconformist activities with unabated zeal'.²²⁸ By 1685 he had become 'a member of the Wrexham Nonconforming Church,'²²⁹ although that did not indicate he was as yet a convinced Baptist. The subject does not appear in his correspondence with David Lloyd of Northop in 1685-86.

The correspondence with David Lloyd clearly reveals a strong minded dissenter if not yet a convinced Baptist. He wrote at length on 11 August 1685 explaining the reasons for his separation from the Church of England.²³⁰ David Lloyd replied on 27 March 1686 about the authority of diocesan bishops.²³¹ In his rambling style Edwards stressed freedom of conscience is prior to the laws of man. He berated the Anglican hierarchy:

such is their zeale, that though these be all ye strength they have to urge yet if

²²⁶ Palmer, *History of the Older Nonconformity in Wrexham*, p.98 & Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.149.

²²⁷ B. Heaton, *Short History of Rhual* (Shrewsbury, 1987), p.6.

²²⁸ Ibid, p.6.

²²⁹ Ibid, p.60.

²³⁰ Rhual MSS D/HE/502, Flintshire Records Office.

²³¹ Rhual MSS D/HE/503, Flintshire Records Office.

we will not thereupon comply with them. They forthwith exclaime against us, as proud, willful, schismatical, seditious, nay repugnant and reproach us as people unworthy to live.²³²

Edwards explained he is not seeking to detract from the authority of the Church of England:

but to obviate ye foolish, vaine, servile disposition of some who think they can not sufficiently evidence themselves to be true sons of ye church unless they subscribe to her such a transcendent, magisterial uncontrollable power as Jesus Xt never invested her with.²³³

He linked his perception of highhandedness with a proximity to Catholicism.

No true Protestant can give blind obedience to Church Governors in all things, it is ye highest usurpation to robb men of ye liberty of their judgments that wch wee plead for against ye Papists.²³⁴

He almost concluded on a conciliatory note writing ‘you shall find yt my separation proceeds from a discriminative not a condemning judgment of others,’²³⁵ but his concluding flurry, anticipating the combative style of his later pamphleteering, becomes an accusation that ‘you are delivering Dissenters to ye secular power’²³⁶ in a manner reminiscent of the high priests handing over Christ to Pontius Pilate.

Edwards was not given to compromise. He wrote at length setting out the substances of the Protestant Reformation as:

Apostolical:

- 1 That Predestination, and consequently Election and Reprobation are absolute
- 2 That the Covenant of Grace had not a temporal but eternal origination.....
- 3 When God came to reveal this Counsel of His Will, this branch and part of the eternal compact between Him and His Son, and to represent to the Church what had been transacted within the Vail for the Faith and deificationhe did it by the institutions of a Priesthood and Sacrifices...The Priesthood and Sacrifices of the Law were not the original Exemplar,...but a transcription and copy of what was done in heaven itself...a Type of what should be afterwards accomplished in the earth.
- 4 Peculiar Redemption as wrought out by an unmetaphorical sacrifice, and identically substituted sufferings, offered, laid down, and accepted of as a Price, solution or personally proper ransom.....
- 5 A proper representative Headship...essentially differs from that which is more

²³² Rhual MSS D/HE/502, Flintshire Records Office.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

particularly a Headship of preheminance, Politicalness, Rectoralship and Influence, tho' All wholly and eminently in Christ.

- 6 That personal Justification is positively and materially distinct both in its Order and Place, nature or kind from a heart-renovation or change of the inward man. That Inherent Sanctification is the fruit both of the change of our state and nature: and not anything either of the nature or essence of that reformation which purely arises from the refining and refurbishing of old depraved moral principles.
- 8 That the doctrine of Assurance is the Scripture Protestant doctrine, which all the people of the Lord are enjoined by way of precept, and encouraged by infinite promises to press after and is attainable.
- 9 That true grace in its saving nature and kind carries in the very bowels thereof the promise of perseverance unto glory.²³⁷

Defending Crisp vigorously whilst criticizing Richard Baxter, Thomas Edwards wrote:

The substance of these positions, Reader, is what the old Protestant Reformers, as such, adhered to....New attempts have been made formerly and of late both by craft, and subtily, violence and impudence and that under a pretence of moderation, and a new coin'd milder way to strip us of the same.²³⁸

O Reverend Baxter for what end, or to what good hast thou wrote so many volumes for the Conditional Justification by Faith and Obedience? To how many contentions hast thou given occasion? How many previous hours hast thou lost to thyself and the Reverend Brethren? Into an Abyss of how many anti-Gospel Errors are they not sunk, who glory in thess as their Guide and Patron?²³⁹

His pamphlet *A Plain and Impartial Enquiry into Gospel truth* is equally damning in his criticism of Daniel Williams. The title page sets his agenda 'in reference to the Doctrine of Justification: and the Nature of his Proceedings: with his testimonies thereupon.'²⁴⁰

The opening page sets the tone.

Here is an author crept into the press ...under the specious pretence of a Peace-maker. The methods he takes to compass his end will be found, upon a strict and impartial examination ...of reconciling Papists and Protestants.²⁴¹

²³⁷ Ibid, pp.118-128.

²³⁸ Ibid, pp.128-9.

²³⁹ Ibid, p. 130.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 147 quoting Edwards, *A Plain and Impartial Enquiry into Gospel Truth as Stated and Vindicated by Mr. Dan Williams* (London: W. Marshall, 1693).

²⁴¹ Ibid, p. 148.

His technique is to quote Daniel Williams favourably prior to lambasting him severely:

Our author tells us...that the blessing promised on the Conditions of the Covenant of Grace are merely of grace (pretty honest). They be for another's sake and not our own (good still). They are given to such as are condemned by the Covenant of Works (exceeding well) and that i.e. Their persons are still condemnable by the Law for the imperfection of the performed Gospel conditions? Here lyes his Jocking Trade in Divinity, as pamper'd and pump'd up with a seeming orthodoxy at first appearance, but by then he is sited and tryed, we shall find him foundring and jading of all four.²⁴²

Towards the end of the pamphlet Edwards declared 'I look upon his whole treatise from first to last to be but one entire compacted falsehood.'²⁴³

With regard to 'our author's sentiment of Justification'²⁴⁴ there is a great sense of unconscious irony in the way Thomas Edwards refers the 'unbiased reader' to

an impartial disquisition of his book and particularly therein his explication of Phil.3:8ff, & c ...where though he tells us that he owns the imputed righteousness of Christ, yet, sayes he, to ground it on this place would be a great damage to the truth.²⁴⁵

Edwards' impartial conclusion is:

Thus our Author like a dextrous juggler as conscious of what he had done, having laid down the platform of his robbery, in despoiling the Church of Christ of the chiefest and richest part of the promises of the Covenant, next unto those which are peculiarly personal, would have us incapable of recovering the same, in an honest inquisition after so notorious and mischievous attempt, by his application of Jam.1:26. To the fagg end of his Treatise, which he very gravely and fairly bequeaths unto his Reader in the nature of a Gagg, that he might thereby the more covertly and undisturbedly proceed in the wretchedness of his designs, Unto which I shall subjoyn Isa 62:1, Jer1:17.....In the contemplation whereof we shall at present leave this our Theologaster, till we further hear from him.²⁴⁶

Edwards included amongst his writings a critique of what he called 'a small pamphlet entitulated, *The Agreement in Doctrine among the Dissenting ministers in London*. Subscribed Decemb.16 1692.' It referred to 'the present Debates against the Dissenting Ministers, justly and very wretchedly occasioned by one Mr. Daniel

²⁴² Ibid, pp153-4.

²⁴³ Ibid, p. 164.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 158.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, pp165-6.

Williams, in a most corrupt piece of his, called, *Gospel Truth Stated and Vindicated*, wherein some of Dr. Crisp's opinions are consider'd and the opposite Truths are plainly stated and confirmed by the said Author'.²⁴⁷ Edwards' opinion is 'I must confess (all things considered) I never met with a more useless unintelligible, and yet insnaring Engine in all my days.'²⁴⁸ Given the vitriol which Edwards possessed for those with whom he disagreed, one can only pity the people who were pronounced guilty when they appeared before him at the magistrates bench!

Thomas Edwards was a frequent letter writer, particularly with Isaac Chauncy whose assistant from 1699 was Isaac Watts. On 27 May 1694 Chauncy wrote to Edwards enclosing one of his pamphlets and hoping he 'is still working on his refutation of Baxterianism.'²⁴⁹ Chauncy also offered comments on Robert Barclay, the Quaker, and his hopes for the growth of their own cause. Chauncy wrote to Edwards again on 9 July 1694 saying that he has read *Crispianism Vnmaskt*, and is pleased Edwards has decided to produce *Baxterianisme Barefac'd* by itself. Mr. Marshall, the printer, is hoping to get it into a 6d book and on better paper than the last one. *Baxterianiam Barefac'd* will be of singular use, Mr. Baxter 'having buried his errors in such a heap of rubbish writings.'²⁵⁰ He is pleased Edwards 'brings down Mr. Baxter's errors to the Quakers' opinion wch will sett a very black mark vpon them.'²⁵¹

The correspondence between Chauncy and Edwards continued over the next eighteen months. The Rhual papers contain more of Chauncy's letters to Edwards than of Edwards' to Chauncy. Chauncy responded to Edwards on 8 July 1695 thanking him for his letter along with 'a box-ful of Antineonomianism which he has read with great Satisfaction.'²⁵² He believed Edwards has 'trod the right path,'²⁵³ but perhaps his books are a little long for this 'lazy age, there being nothing but short pamphlets that will sell.'²⁵⁴ He complains printers are only interested in profits 'that he has decided to write no more.'²⁵⁵ Chauncy grumbles about 'their own party'²⁵⁶ from which he has

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 182.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 183.

²⁴⁹ Rhual MSS D/HE/508, Flintshire Records Office.

²⁵⁰ Rhual MSS D/HE/509, Flintshire Records Office.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Rhual MSS D/HE/511, Flintshire Records Office.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

found ‘many slights and contempts ...there being but few of them who will buy his writings so he will not trouble himself, with dirty printers and an ungrateful world.’²⁵⁷ Finally he hopes that Edwards ‘will be able to make a journey to London.’²⁵⁸ A month later, on 7 August 1695 Chauncy wrote to Edwards having had time to read ‘most of the recipients’ collections.’²⁵⁹ Nothing has really changed ‘few will read or buy those writings which are in defence of the truth.’²⁶⁰ The bad news is ‘there is no possibility of getting the recipients’ writings into the press except at the recipients’ expense or by printing a sufficient number to pay the costs of printing.’²⁶¹ The printers would require a run of 200 copies which would cost c.4/6 or 5/-, ‘bound in sheep, and very few people would spend on books of that bulk upon controversial subjects,’²⁶² so he suggested it be radically reduced ‘to make a 12d book.’²⁶³ Chauncy wrote to Edwards at a later date, but the manuscript is mutilated making the date indecipherable, sending Edwards a copy of a ‘recently published pamphlet called *Crispianisme Vnmaskt*, which their adversaries much boast of but it is a very slight thing.’²⁶⁴ Nonetheless he would like Edwards to answer it briefly.

In sharp contrast to Edwards, John Evans who was by now the elderly pastor of the Old Meeting, is alleged to have expressed his views in moderate terms in making his stand against Crisp. He ‘bore himself in a way which retained him the respect of those who felt constrained to take an opposite course.’²⁶⁵ He died in 1700. His son, also John Evans, had assisted him for some years so it seemed natural for the Old Meeting to invite him to succeed his father. His theology was nearer to that of Daniel Williams than Tobias Crisp, so his stipulation that he would become pastor if the two congregations reunited fell on deaf ears, and he only served the New Meeting. His failure to persuade the two groups to reunite under his ministry indicates how both sides were now travelling along different roads which would lead to greater divergences in ecclesiology and theology as the new century developed.

256

Ibid.

257

Ibid.

258

Ibid.

259

Rhual MSS D/HE/512, Flintshire Records Office.

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Ibid.

261

Ibid.

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Ibid.

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Ibid.

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Ibid.

265

Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.53.

It can be argued that John Evans' ordination as the first pastor of the New Meeting in 1702 was a final confirmation that the rift between the Old Meeting and the New Meeting had become permanent. Except for Jenkin Thomas from the Old Meeting all the ministers at the ordination were Presbyterian, Matthew Henry from Chester, Charles Owen from Warrington, James Owen who had moved from Oswestry to Shrewsbury, Frances Tallents of Shrewsbury, and Samuel Benion who later went to Shrewsbury.

According to A.N. Palmer the Presbyterians were not alone in leaving the Old Meeting. Independents such as the Kenricks and the Wynne's of Ruabon also withdrew.²⁶⁶ In a letter to Philip Henry, James Owen mentioned that the Presbyterians in Wrexham 'were united', while Mr. Evans' people 'were divided', and the meetings of the Presbyterians were actually 'better attended than when the Independents and Presbyterians worshipped together.'²⁶⁷ There is no reference to this letter in the *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry* edited and published by M.H. Lee in 1882, and Palmer does not reveal his source. He qualified his remark by suggesting that there may have been some residual Presbyterians from the parish church who now openly joined the New Meeting, given that Ambrose Lewis, who had earlier conformed, was not only worshipping with Presbyterians but had resumed preaching as well.²⁶⁸

Twelve years before the vitriolic opinions of Thomas Edwards were published in *Baxterianism Barefac'd*, seeds of separation had also been sown by Wrexham born Daniel Williams. He had kept in touch with local Presbyterians during his ministry in Ireland, as chaplain to the Countess of Meath and then as minister of the Wood Street congregation in Dublin until the troubles of 1687 caused him to flee. Eventually in 1688, he became minister of the Presbyterian church at Bishopsgate in London. His offer of land, made in 1687, was accepted and was leased for 99 years from 23 March 1698.²⁶⁹ The rent was four peppercorns per year payable on the feast of the annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, should it ever be formally demanded. Twelve trustees were appointed. Six were from outside Wrexham: John Hunt Esq.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 54.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

from Chester who came from a Shropshire family, Thomas Hunt of the Middle Temple in London, Andrew Kenrick of Chester who belonged to the Shropshire Kenricks, Matthew Henry of Chester, James Owen from Oswestry and John Mollineux, a merchant from Liverpool.²⁷⁰ The other six trustees were local. Hugh Roberts was a currier and corvisor and a brother-in-law of Daniel Williams, Hugh Davies was a one time ironmonger, Edward Mainwaring was a draper and friend of Philip Henry. Stephen Davies, brother of Hugh Davies, became a Presbyterian minister and settled in Banbury (Daniel Williams spoke of him as his 'cousin'),²⁷¹ John Wynne was a barrister.

John Evans resigned in 1704 and was invited to become Daniel Williams' assistant. He remained in London for the rest of his life, succeeding Daniel Williams at Bishopsgate. A.N. Palmer wondered whether he did not stay long in Wrexham because his connections with the Old Meeting might have made things awkward for him.²⁷² Given all that had happened it is a valid conjecture.

The Baptist Church

After the defection of the younger John Evans to be pastor of the New Meeting, the Old Meeting called Jenkin Thomas (d.1711) who had previously served as assistant to John Evans senior from 1689-99 prior to going to Utrecht University for further study, but no details of his ministry have survived. It is possible he resigned through dissatisfaction with either his salary or the manner in which he was paid. The church account book details payment to cover the period 24 June and Christmas 1708 with the entry 'gave Mr. Jenkin Thomas arrears due from the congregation – £5-0-d.'²⁷³ G.V. Price says he was the last minister to serve The Old Meeting as an Independent,²⁷⁴ which is a slightly misleading statement although it might be true on a technicality given that he was baptized by immersion in 1715.

The account book includes entries for the payment of visiting preachers during the

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid p.59.

²⁷³ The Old Meeting, copy of accounts 1700-1728, Chester St. Baptist Church, Wrexham, p.1.

²⁷⁴ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 143.

pastorless years from 1708 to 1713, with additional payments for feeding and stabling the horse:

1710	8 th February	Gave Mr. Samuel Jones a minister from South Wales	£0- 5-0
1711	29 th Sep	gave Mr Baddy	£0- 5-0
	10 th Oct	payed for thegrass of his horse	£0- 1-0
	21 st Oct	Gave Mr Jones of Sallop	£0- 5-0
1713	26 th May	Gave Mr Pugh Minister for a horse to Sallop and his charges red Lion	£0-15-6 ²⁷⁵

Timothy Thomas, a Baptist and grandson of John Evans, came over from Pershore, ‘once in every three months.’²⁷⁶ However the account book entries suggest his visits were more irregular:

1711	5 th March	£0- 5-0d
	11 th October	£0-5-0d
1712	11 th March	£0-5-0d
	12 th July	£0-5-0d
	9 th September	£0- 5-0d

The members ‘were not altogether willing to appoint him as their pastor’²⁷⁷ because not all of them were Baptists.²⁷⁸ The church is often referred to as ‘Morgan Llwyd’s Independent church,’²⁷⁹ or the ‘Presbyterian-Congregational church’.²⁸⁰

It is traditional to think of the eighteenth century as a high period of elegance, fashion and sophistication. The account book presents a stark reminder of the permanence of grinding poverty and a maintenance of consistent charitable activity by the Old Meeting. The account book details the distribution of funds from Samuel Hignett’s legacy of £150 bequeathed in 1706. He had also left a similar sum to The New Meeting, and £100 to Matthew Henry’s congregation in Chester. The relevant part of his will reads:

I give and bequeath to the society of Christ’s members and people belonging to the meeting house in Wrexham, called The Barn, whereof Jenkin Thomas is overseer, one hundred and fifty pounds of currant money of England to be payd to ye minister, Elders, and undertakers of that Society to be distributed among Christ’s poore, needy members according to their nessissity and ye discretion of ye heads of ye congregation.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ The Old Meeting, copy of accounts 1700-1728, Chester St. Baptist Church, Wrexham.

²⁷⁶ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 131.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ M.R. Watts, *The Dissenters: from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, Vol.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.142.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, pp.207, 296.

²⁸¹ Preface to copy of account book 1700-1728, Chester Street Baptist Church. Palmer *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.95, Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.143.

The following details are a selection of relevant and interesting entries which illustrate the charitable use of the funds:

1709	4 th Dec. Payd for cutting a grave for a poor woman a minister's daughter and the coffin	£0- 5-6
	4 th Dec. Gave Joshua Buttals for to buy a coate for Tho: Ellis	£0- 3-6
	17 th June Gave a coffin for Edward Aprichard	£0- 4-0
1711	6 th August Gave a coffin for Allice Joseph	£0- 4-6
	26 th August gave a coffine for Sam Fenna	£0- 6-0
	19 Nov Gave Jane Ethell to pay her rent	£0- 5-0
1712	12 th July distributed 10lb as followeth	
	Payd me uncle Samuel Kenrick the sum of eight punds for arrears of rent for the meeting instead of the collection that the rent used to be payd out	£8- 0-0
	Gave more for the use of the congregation	£0- 4-0
	Gave Richard Reeves	£0- 2-0
	Gave for berring Elizabeth Owens coffine and Crape	£0- 9-0
	Gave a coffine and shute of crape for Elizabeth Reeves	£0- 9-0
1713	2 nd May gave amongst the poor and for June	£0-16-0
	11 Sep pd for hay and oates for his hors	£0- 1-6
	11 Sep gave more	£0- 4-0
	25 Dec Gave a poor widow	£0- 0-6

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The most frequent recipient of the church's charity was "Ould Ann". It would be wonderful to discover who she was and the nature of her circumstances but the account book offers no clues as to her identity. Amongst the entries listed for her are:

1708	24 th June to Crismas (three entries listed: no dates)	£0-1-0d
		£0-0-6d
		£0-0-6d
1709	2 nd June	£0-2-0d
	27 th August	£0-1-6d
	27 th October	£0-0-6d
	26 th November	£0-2-0d
1710	18 th May	£0-2-0d
1711	6 th June	£0-0-6d
	19 th November	£0-5-0d
	22 nd December	£0-0-6d
1712	18 th July payd ould Ann's rent	£0-4-0d
	26 th October	£0-0-6d
	10 th December	£0-1-6d
	27 th December	£0-1-0d
1713	27 th January payd Ould Ann's rent	£0-8-0d
	Gave her	£0-0-8d

A few years later in 1729 John Mellor and John Lloyd, who were Wrexham magistrates, informed the parish church wardens ‘the poor who are settled inhabitants of the parish of Wrexham are of late greatly increased by ye Extraordinary price of bread corn and partly by the Sickness which hath long continued in these parts’, and they asked for an extra levy of 2d in the pound.²⁸⁴ Unfortunately the surviving accounts from the Old Meeting do not cover 1729.

It is uncertain exactly when John Williams came to the church. Rev. E. Parry in *Llawlyfr ar Hanes y Bedyddwyr* reckoned it was 1712.²⁸⁵ The church accounts have 1714,²⁸⁶ and A.N. Palmer does not think he could have settled before this date.²⁸⁷ Daniel Neal mentions him as minister of Wrexham Baptists in 1715.²⁸⁸ He came as an Independent but became convinced of the validity of believer’s baptism and was baptised in 1715. The records are silent as to where he was baptised and to the identity of the officiating minister. Because he was known as being ‘of Rhual’,²⁸⁹ it is a reasonable assumption that he was baptised there. For the Old Meeting the importance of John Williams is not the date of his appointment but the consequences of his baptism. Some of the Independents left in protest and worshipped in an old pin factory in Penybryn.²⁹⁰ On the other hand some members of the New Meeting transferred to the Old Meeting.²⁹¹ The Old Meeting could not be described as an entirely Baptist fellowship until much later in the century but his baptism was a seminal moment because all his successors were Baptists. ‘The Independents lost ground until at last it became a thoroughly Anti-paedobaptist society’.²⁹²

283

Ibid.

284

D.W. Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000, p.93.

285

Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.147 quoting E. Parry, *Llawlyfr ar Hanes y Bedyddwyr* but no page ref. given.

286

The Old Meeting, copy of account book 1700-1728 p. 9, listing the peculiar arrangement for paying John Williams.

287

Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.96.

287

Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 147.

288

Ibid, quoting Daniel Neal. No page no. given

289

Ibid and Palmer. *History of the Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.97.

290

Ibid, p.148.

291

Ibid.

292

Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales*, p.208.

The Toleration Act and the Jacobite riots of 1715

The Jacobite Riots in Wrexham during July 1715 conclude the formative period. A detailed analysis of the balance of power and political parties in the wake of the Glorious Revolution followed by the arrival of George I is beyond the scope of this study. However cognizance has to be taken of the changed national circumstances in which the formative years of the Old Meeting came to a close.

The violent changes of the civil war, and the reversal of fortune that came with the restoration were followed by sleight of hand in the Toleration Act of 1689. The title became a convenient summary for what was called ‘An act for exempting their Majesties Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws. Forasmuch as some ease to scrupulous conscience in the exercise of religion may be an effectual means to unite their Majesties protestant subjects in interest and affection.’²⁹³ It was ‘a no more rational and planned piece of legislation than the Act of Uniformity.’²⁹⁴ There was no sudden leap forward in thinking about religious toleration. It is worth noting John Evelyn’s comment at this time that it was ‘an Act of Indulgence for the dissenters, but not exempting them from paying dues to the Church of England, or serving in offices &c. according to law.’²⁹⁵ Jeremy Black’s comment challenges any concept that the act was an all round amicable agreement in which ‘Williamite insistence that Jacobite and Tory opponents were bigoted dogmatists’²⁹⁶ led to the construction of religious toleration as a ‘cardinal English/British virtue.’²⁹⁷ The divisions of faith ‘undermined any effortless ideological dominance and led to many compromises’.²⁹⁸

The hall-mark of the period was a dread of extremism. ‘The Hanoverian Church sought to steer a safe and central course between the Scylla of High Churchism and the Charibdis of Puritanism.’²⁹⁹ Skevington-Wood borrowed the classical analogy

²⁹³ E.N. Williams, *A Documentary History of England 1559-1931*, Vol.2 (London: Penguin Books, 1965) p.121.

²⁹⁴ J. Spurr, *Religion in Restoration England in The Reigns of Charles II and James II* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p.124.

²⁹⁵ Ibid quoting J. Evelyn, *Diary I* iv, 640.

²⁹⁶ J. Black, *Eighteenth Century Britain 1688-1783* (London: Palgrave, 2001), p. 6.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ A. Skevington-Wood, *The Inextinguishable Blaze* (London: Paternoster Press, 1960), p. 7.

from Thomas Edwards' *Gangeana* (not Thomas Edwards Rhual) who applied it to the divisions between hard-line and moderate Presbyterians, and the growing variety of Independents and Baptists.³⁰⁰ The Toleration Act provided the opportunity for mutual attrition to be replaced with reluctant and grudging acceptance that, apart from Catholics and Unitarians, each must put up with the other. The dominance of Anglicanism, divine right monarchy, aristocratic paternalism and a belief in the value of stability were 'more challenged by the need to adapt to the expulsion of James II than by subsequent radicalism'.³⁰¹ R.T. Jenkins made the same point by referring to North Wales as a 'sheltered and conservative region where Dissent was very weak in the early eighteenth century, and where even Methodism, before the middle forties had made but little impression upon an overwhelmingly Anglican populace'.³⁰² D.R. Thomas had said the same thing fifty years earlier: the Church 'so far as the older nonconformity was concerned had little to fear'.³⁰³ For support, Thomas refers to the Episcopal returns of 1715 for the three counties of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Merioneth. There were 'four Presbyterian places of worship with an attendance of 440, five Independent with an attendance of 300, and one Anabaptist with 150'.³⁰⁴ North East Wales was far from being the politically Liberal and chapel dominated industrial society of the nineteenth century.

Two distinct national elements came together in the local troubles of 1715. Allied with the Jacobite tendencies of supporters of James Edward Stuart was the dissatisfaction of the squirearchy which was brought about through the Whigs consolidating their position in the country at large. This sets the Wrexham riots in context. Ecclesiastical factors were secondary to expressions of anger and frustration at the downturn of Tory power at the grassroots. As the parish churches were the spiritual home of the Tory squire, the natural targets for the rioters to vent their spleen were the dissenting meeting houses. The remark by John Kenrick of the New Meeting that 'there was a riot of the Tradesmen, and some of the principal inhabitants of the town'³⁰⁵ firmly places Wrexham in this national perspective. They were not

³⁰⁰ R.J.Acheson. *Radical Puritans in England 1550-1660* (London: Longman, 1990),p.49.

³⁰¹ Black, *Eighteenth Century Britain 1688-1783*, p.3.

³⁰² R.T. Jenkins, *The Moravian Brethren in North Wales* (London: Hon. Soc. of Cymmrodorion, 1938), p.19.

³⁰³ Thomas, *History of the Diocese of St. Asaph*, p.98.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p. 63.

unambiguous Jacobite activists but Anglicans at heart, who used the Jacobite unrest as a convenient opportunity to make their contribution for a return to the good old days. As A.H. Dodd commented ‘overzeal for the State Church let loose the enemies of sectarianism in the riots of 1715.’³⁰⁶ J. Black endorses this view by including Wrexham amongst his list of riots during 1715. ‘Religious issues were “real”, indistinguishable from political and social issues, and worth fighting over.’³⁰⁷ The same point was made in a Victorian guide to Wrexham which refers to the ‘Church and King rioters of the last century’³⁰⁸ who ‘vented their fury: violated graves and destroyed external walls’³⁰⁹ at the dissenters’ burying ground. J. Ivimey made the same point forty five years earlier: ‘Many of the Tory Lords joined in the design, and promoted a rebellion in favour of the Pretender’.³¹⁰

The timing of the riots underlines the view that their basis was socio-political rather than an expression of Jacobite tendencies. The height of the Wrexham rioting was in the second half of July. The climax of the Jacobite rebellion culminating in the defeats at Sheriffmuir and Preston occurred four months later in mid-November.

John Kenrick, minister of The New Meeting, kept a detailed log of events:

15 th July	Riot of the tradesmen and some principal inhabitants.
16 th July	Rioters broke into Meeting House, pulled down the pulpit and pews, and threw them into the pool. Broke the doors and battered the windows The Old Meeting was roof uncovered. Slates, and laths, and walls were destroyed the same night.
17 th July	The Lord’s Day. Children and young people did a great deal of harm to The New Meeting. House. Being the Lord’s Day Mr. Williams and I preached at Hugh Roberts house to a numerous and mournful assembly. From that day until The Old Meeting house was repaired Mr. Williams continued to preach the Word. And administer the Sacrament at Mr. Roberts’, as I at Mrs. Nicholls. ³¹¹

Rioting continued sporadically until 21 July until the defeats at Sheriffmuir and

³⁰⁶ Dodd, *History of Wrexham*, p. 173.

³⁰⁷ Black, *Eighteenth Century Britain 1688-1783*, p. 139.

³⁰⁸ J. Jones, *Wrexham and its Neighbourhood: History and Guide* (Wrexham, 1868), p.32.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, p.33.

³¹⁰ J. Ivimey, *History of English Baptists*, Vol 3(London: Burditt, Button, Hamilton, Baynes, 1823), p.120.

³¹¹ Palmer, *History of The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p. 63.

Preston. The church damage occurred on 16 and 17 July. The New Meeting's building was destroyed and the Old Meeting's rented premises were severely damaged. According to John Kendrick, he and John Williams spoke at a joint service, but on subsequent Sundays the two churches worshipped at different venues. The cost of repairs for the New Meeting was met by the government. The barn used by the Old Meeting was owned by Samuel Kendrick who oversaw the repairs from his compensation, so there is no record of the costs in the church accounts.

Following the riots dissenters nationwide sought to ensure their voting powers in the counties and boroughs with a view to safeguarding their liberties. John Evans the younger acted as national returning officer. The returns for the Old Meeting indicated an average attendance of 150 which included 14 tradesmen, 23 county votes and 6 for the borough.³¹² The average attendance for the New Meeting was 230 including 20 tradesmen, 29 county votes and 3 for the borough.

Conclusion

During this formative period from 1650–1715 the influence of the three most significant factors of geography, language, and associating was minimal. Language was never an issue, the primary tongue being English. Geographical consideration was a key feature in the dispatching of Morgan Llwyd to Wrexham within the over-arching influence of puritan dominance during the inter-regnum, and regional geography isolated the Old Meeting within Wales. The emerging Independent and Baptist churches in South Wales were a world away, and there was no contact with Baptist churches in the neighbouring Welsh counties because as yet there were none. There was fellowship between dissenting clergy and the baptistery at Rhual became a link between the Old Meeting, and Baptist churches at Nantwich and Hill Cliffe, near Warrington. However there was no formal associating to parallel the embryonic associations in England, and the over-arching influence of the Crisp controversy in contributing to the separation of the New and Old meetings ensured that by the dawn of the eighteenth century the Old Meeting stood alone as a Baptist church.

³¹² Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.158.

SUMMARY OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

CHAPTER ONE THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The Old Meeting became the designated title for the composite gathered church of Prebyterians, Independants and Baptists in Wrexham.

The New Meeting became the designated title for the Presbyterians who established their separate cause in the 1690s.

KEY PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE OLD MEETING

Walter Cradock	Influential Puritan. Expelled from Wrexham in 1635. Strongly influenced the teenage Morgan Llwyd.
Thomas Edwards	Lived in Rhual Hall, Mold. Dissenter and controversialist pamphleteer. Belonged to the Old Meeting.
John Evans	Minister of the Old Meeting from 1688-1700.
Morgan Llwyd	Radical Independent. Former chaplain with Cromwell's forces. Established the Old Meeting in Wrexham.
William Lloyd	Bishop of St. Asaph from 1680-92. Sought to influence leading dissenters through public debates. Favourably inclined to Philip Henry. Fierce opponent of John Evans.
Jenkin Thomas	Assistant to John Evans from 1689-1699.
John Williams	Independent minister. Appointed to Wrexham c. 1714. Baptised in 1715.

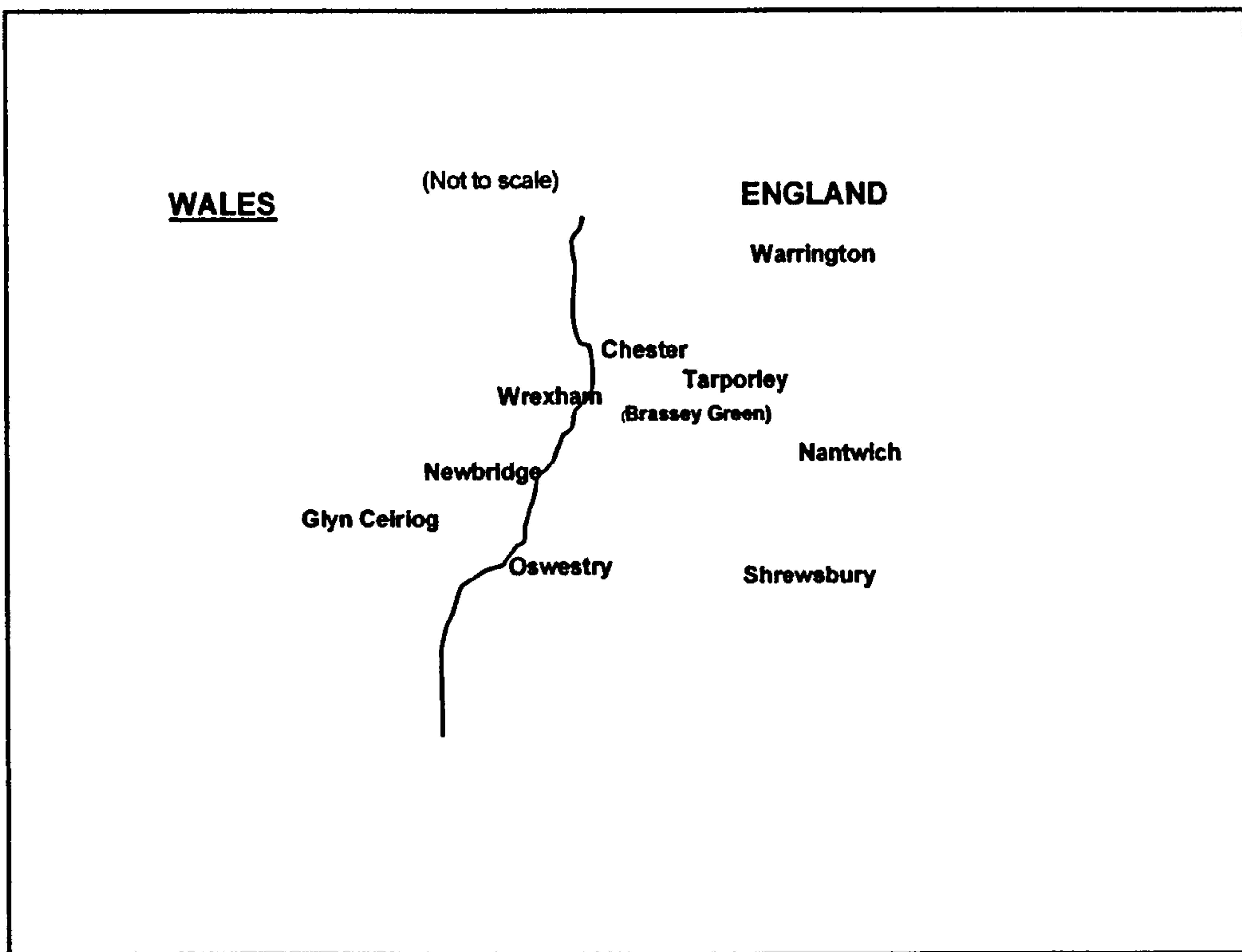
KEY PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE NEW MEETING

John Evans	Son of John Evans. Invited to succeed his father at the Old Meeting. Declined and became minister to the New Meeting. Left in 1704 to become assistant to Daniel Williams in London.
Philip Henry	Leading Presbyterian with an influential ministry in the Wrexham area.
John Kenrick	Minister of the New Meeting

CHAPTER TWO

CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION: IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In geographical terms the long established commercial triangle between Shrewsbury, Nantwich and Wrexham had a bearing on the first Baptist developments in Newbridge and Glyn Ceiriog. There were also strong dissenting links between Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Nantwich and North East Wales but without any great sense of cultural or national differences.



When we look more closely at Wrexham and the area to the south from Cefn Mawr to Glyn Ceiriog it will be seen that during the eighteenth century this was the area in which the three formative factors played the greater part particularly in the ministries of Evan Jenkins and David Jones.

The proximity of Chester had some effect through a connection with the Independent church at Common Hall Lane where Joseph Jenkins ministered on his return from

London prior to accepting the call to Wrexham. Personal contacts with a family who later transferred their membership to the Old Meeting played a key part in the evolving ecclesiology of the Old Meeting. There were also contacts in south Cheshire, but they did not develop into any formal association. At the end of the century with the near closure of the Old Meeting as a consequence of Sandemanianism¹ it was the old dissenting connection with Shrewsbury which salvaged the Baptist church in Wrexham.

After John Williams' baptism the Independents' influence gradually declined but the Old Meeting could not be considered an entirely Baptist church until 1778 when Joseph Jenkins consolidated its ecclesiology through his revision of the trust deeds. Between 1725 and 1740 the presence of Independents,² the policy of open communion, 'few ministers in Wales sanctioned that practice,'³ and finding bilingual preachers⁴ have each been linked to the absence of a settled ministry. Other sources suggest bilingualism was not a major problem because English was the predominant language, although issues of language surfaced during the ministries of Evan Jenkins and David Jones both of whom could preach through the medium of English and Welsh.. Evan Jenkins preached in Welsh at one Sunday service and in English at the other. A.H. Dodd refers to the 1742 edition of Defoe's *Tours* quoting 'two large Meeting Houses in one of which we were told they preach in Welsh at one part of the day, and in English at the other'.⁵ Dodd concluded this was the Old Meeting but adds both the Old and New Meetings remained predominantly English. A.N. Palmer and G.V. Price wondered whether David Jones' command of English left something to be desired⁶ and was amongst his reasons for leaving.

¹ Sandemanianism is considered later in the chapter. See pp. 89-92.

² G.V. Price, *The Old Meeting, The History of Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham* (Wrexham: E. Jones and Sons [1930]),p.163.

³ J. Davis, *History of the Welsh Baptists: from the year sixty-three to the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy* (Pittsburgh: 1835), p .95, &. Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.163.

⁴ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.163.

⁵ A.H. Dodd, *History of Wrexham* (Wrexham: Hughes and Son, 1957), p.174.

⁶ Ibid, & Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 181.

The Old Meeting could not be considered isolated during the fifteen years between the death of John Williams in 1725 and the appointment of Evan Jenkins in 1740. Visiting preachers came from Llanfyllin (Montgomeryshire), Trelawnyd (Flintshire), Rhydwlwym (Carmarthenshire), and Blaenau (Monmouthshire).⁷ John Oulton came from Nantwich.⁸ Development in mission restarted with the arrival of Evan Jenkins, and was continued by David Jones.

Over-arching national, regional and denominational influences were not particularly significant for English-speaking Baptist development. Unlike the seventeenth century the Georgian period proved to be a settled time. There are references in the Chester Street, Wrexham, church book to 'national affairs' but the details and specific references are unspecified.⁹ Regional and denominational considerations become intertwined in terms of different parties such as the General and the Particular Baptists and the influence of Sandemanianism principally through J.R. Jones of Ramoth. In contrast to the evangelistic work of Christmas Evans in Anglesey similar work was more low key in north east Wales.

The relationship with the New Meeting

From their common roots the two Meetings were now firmly established as separate causes. Whilst some Independent members transferred to the New Meeting after John Williams' baptism by immersion in 1715, Arthur Lewis of Vron Farm Brymbo, and Peter Chaloner, a shoemaker from Hope Street, moved to the Old Meeting.¹⁰ Some Independents left 'and went to Penybryn where they worshipped in an old pin factory.'¹¹ The site is now occupied by the Welsh Baptist Chapel. A.N. Palmer believed the cause at Penybryn did not commence until 1783 when 21 members left the New Meeting because

⁷ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.163.

⁸ The significance of the Cheshire connection is considered later in the chapter.

⁹ See for example Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Church Book, p.23.

¹⁰ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.150.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 148.

they were unhappy with its latitudinarian theology.¹² There is no record in the church book of any exodus from the Old Meeting to Penybryn in the early 1780s but the attempt in 1785 to use the dissenters' burying ground by the Methodists, calling themselves 'an Independent Church',¹³ which 'hath of late years started up',¹⁴ would suggest the formation of the Independent church at the later date.

A more cordial relationship replaced the friction stemming from the separation of the Old and New Meetings, until the dispute erupted in 1774 over the dissenters' burial ground. Rapprochement came more from the New Meeting than the Old, which presents a difficulty in understanding its attitude in the dispute over the burying ground, particularly in view of the personal generosity of Francis Boulton to Joseph Jenkins. In 1724 Mrs. Elizabeth Roberts, a sister of Daniel Williams, directed her trustees that £2-10-0d per year be paid to John Williams and his successors at the Old Meeting. Whenever it had no minister the money was to be paid 'to any other minister or ministers of the Gospel of the Presbyterian persuasion officiating within the counties of North Wales.'¹⁵ It was paid annually to ministers at Chester Street until the mid 1970s. When new trustees for the legacy were appointed in 1748 both Francis Boulton and John Kenrick of Ruabon, the son of Boulton's predecessor, belonged to the New Meeting.¹⁶

Under Boulton's ministry the New Meeting became influenced by Arianism and drifted towards Unitarianism, which A.N. Palmer suggested only gained a significant footing within Wrexham¹⁷ rather than the area at large. Although the closest ties between the two churches occurred during Francis Boulton's ministry, the archives do not indicate a Unitarian trend within the Old Meeting. In 1749 Boulton lent the trustees of the Old Meeting £17 at interest towards the purchase of the land where the present church now

¹² A.N. Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, (Wrexham: Woodall, Minshull and Thomas, 1888), p.174.

¹³ Copy of the Church Book, Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, p.48.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Copy of account book 1706-1728, Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, p.9, & p.21, Price *The Old Meeting*, p. 148 and Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.149.

¹⁶ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.74.

¹⁷ Ibid.

stands, although the first chapel was not built until 1762.¹⁸ It consisted of two houses, five cottages, and a 'quillet or croft at the north end of these last.'¹⁹ Amongst the trustees was Daniel Kenrick who was a brother to John Kenrick, the former pastor of The New Meeting.²⁰ About 1760 Boulton, with a number of other people, was able to secure an exhibition for Joseph Jenkins, the son of Evan Jenkins, to attend Aberdeen University. One of the other benefactors was James Buttall, a Presbyterian and wealthy ironmonger from London, who retired to Wrexham in 1765 and joined the New Meeting.²¹ He had also contributed generously towards the purchase of the land for the Old Meeting,²² donating twice the required amount to provide the trustees with funds to enable a house to be built for the minister.²³

Eleanor Hughes, who died in 1773, left her house in Hope Street to the poor of the New Meeting, subject to two rent charges of five shillings payable to the ministers of both Meetings for the annual purchase of a Christmas goose,²⁴ her bequest occurring just before Joseph Jenkins initiated the dispute over the dissenting burial ground.²⁵ Whilst it could also be considered as an arrangement of convenience, the final example of rapprochement occurred in January 1780 when Francis Boulton officiated at the funeral service for Benjamin Jones of the Old Meeting²⁶ because Joseph Jenkins was in London for 'assistance in repairing and enlarging our place of worship and making a baptistery with the necessary conveniences therein.'²⁷

¹⁸ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 174, & Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p. 100. Palmer does not specify 1749.

¹⁹ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p. 100.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. p.80 and p.102.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.149, &.. Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.79.

²⁵ This topic is discussed later in the chapter.

²⁶ Chester St. Baptist Church, Wrexham, Copy of The Church Book 1783-1786, p.31.

Evan Jenkins and David Jones

According to T.M. Bassett, although many new churches had been founded between 1689 and 1776, 'the geographical area of the denomination had not been extended much – it still remained a South Wales denomination.'²⁸ This was despite occasional visits to the Old Meeting from ministers based in South Wales such as Samuel Jones of Cilfowyr.²⁹ Bassett links the development of activity in the north with the arrival of Evan Jenkins from Penygarn, Monmouthshire, in 1740 and David Jones in 1755. David Jones arrived from Anglesey but had been born in Pembrokeshire.

In addition to its significance through the purchase of the land for the first chapel, Evan Jenkins' ministry included a major development in Newbridge. The Baptist presence in the Cefn area had several sources. The oldest was a tenuous link with Morgan Llwyd via the Quakers. John ap John, one of two delegates Morgan Llwyd sent to meet George Fox in 1653, was so impressed that he returned as a Quaker, and a meeting house was established at Cefnbychan. When it became disused through Quaker migration to Pennsylvania the Baptists were invited to use the building.³⁰

Links with Nantwich owed as much to commercial geography as to evangelism. Thomas Shankland, who held Welsh language pastorates in Mold and Rhyl prior to becoming librarian at Bangor University, said the Nantwich and Cefn areas traded in flannel and lindsey and that the workers moved from one area to the other.³¹ G.V. Price thought the information originated from Henry Maurice whose account of Baptist churches in Wales was written c.1675. 'Some of the Wrexham Church do meet near Chirke Castle.'³² Price thought they probably met at the house of Matthew Samuel in Nantybelan who had a

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ T.M. Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists* (Swansea: Ilston Press, 1977), p.100.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ G.V. Price. 'Servants of God: history of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and district', unpublished MS (1964), Chester St. Baptist Church, Wrexham, p.7.

³¹ Price, *The Old Meeting*. p.69.

³² Quoted in Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 119.

wool and linen factory and was a member at Nantwich.³³ Price quotes the claim by Baptist historian Cernyw Williams that the first contact was with the Nantwich church³⁴ which was founded in 1675.³⁵ Their first minister, Samuel Acton, was the wealthy owner of a salt mine and a tobacco merchant.³⁶ There is anecdotal evidence about a labourer who walked to Nantwich from Cefn looking for work.³⁷ Having attached himself to the Nantwich church he subsequently asked Samuel Acton to preach at Cefn with the result that a mission outpost was established.

If commercial geography played a key role in the founding of Baptist activity in Newbridge, associating was shaped by theology. The Baptists of Cefn and Newbridge were General Baptists and as such were 'not recognised by the Particular Baptists of Wrexham,'³⁸ so they regularly walked 25 miles to Nantwich for communion.³⁹ A.N. Palmer believes, on the other hand, that they continued to be members at the Old Meeting until 1786.⁴⁰ The church book has an entry for 3 September 1786 recording the dismissal of eight members 'in order to unite with others in forming a Baptist church at New Bridge under the pastoral care of Mr. Jenkin Davies.'⁴¹ T.M. Bassett adds there was also influence from Warrington⁴² without adding any details but he does confirm the commercial connections with Nantwich. The problem of recognition did not primarily relate to the open communion practiced in Wrexham, but to the theological divide between Arminianism and Calvinism. In 1719 Samuel Acton wrote a pamphlet entitled *Naked Truth or a Place for Union*, in which he suggested the Wrexham Baptists refused to recognise their counterparts at Cefn Bychan because they were General Baptists.⁴³ Ironically Henry Phillips, who had a short pastorate in Wrexham during 1752-53, left to become minister in Nantwich and 'was the first to leave a Calvinistic imprint upon its

³³ Price, 'Servants of God', p.5.

³⁴ Ibid, p.3.

³⁵ *Baptist Union of Great Britain Directory 2005/6*, p.114.

³⁶ S. Timmins, *Dabbers Dissenting* (Nantwich: Market Street Baptist Church, 2003), p.5.

³⁷ Price 'Servants of God', p.3.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.102.

⁴¹ Chester Street Baptist Church, Copy of the Church Book, Wrexham, p.55.

⁴² Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p. 101.

members.’⁴⁴ It might be conjecture, but Evan Jenkins’ personal influence may also have created some rapprochement when, in 1743, younger members at Cefn stopped going to Nantwich and went to Wrexham or Glyn Ceiriog as often as they could, although older members maintained their Nantwich link.⁴⁵

Evan Jenkins was a frequent and popular preacher at Welsh Association meetings but unlike the case with the churches in Cefn and Glyn Ceiriog, their practice of closed communion prevented the Old Meeting from joining. After its near demise following the Sandemanian experience at the close of the century, John Palmer of Shrewsbury played a key part in re-establishing the Old Meeting. Despite his considerable influence, it has to be asked whether Wrexham would have joined the Shropshire Association had the church already belonged to the Welsh Association.

David Jones continued the work in Cefn. Some from Glyn Ceiriog who were present at a baptismal service by the River Dee in 1757 invited him to preach in that district which was said to be ‘as dark and ignorant in Divine things as the regions of Asia or Africa.’⁴⁶ As a consequence the Baptist church in Glyn Ceiriog was established, which would suggest that those who went from Nantwich to Glyn Ceiriog in 1743 were amongst its early pioneers. In the first half of the eighteenth century North East Wales remained a predominantly Anglican area, amply illustrated as late as 1762 by the building of the Baptist chapel at Glyn Ceirog. The church had applied for its license, which the magistrates refused to issue, before the completion of the building. Planning permission was an ecclesiastical rather than a civic matter and David Jones, minister of the Old Meeting, with some of the members found themselves in the bishop’s court. The license was eventually obtained with assistance from the Dissenting Deputies after a two-year battle.

The first pastor John Hughes, and his wife, were received into membership in Wrexham in

⁴³ Price, ‘Servants of God’, p.9.

⁴⁴ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.177.

⁴⁵ Price, ‘Servants of God’. p.10.

February 1775 'having been separated from that church by the unkindness of the people.'⁴⁷ No explanation is given, but it has been suggested it might have been connected with Glyn Ceiriog being a Particular Baptist church which did not practise the laying on of hands. The primary language in Newbridge and Glyn Ceiriog was Welsh, which combined with the practise of closed communion and membership of the Welsh Association led to a loosening of the ties with Wrexham. There are infrequent references to Newbridge in the church book initiated by Joseph Jenkins. One was the referral of Catherine Hughes' application for membership, on 25 July 1781, 'for consulting our brothers and sisters at Newbridge touching her proposal.'⁴⁸ The reply 'that our friends at Newbridge were satisfied concerning her'⁴⁹ arrived on 29 July and it was agreed she be baptised that afternoon. Another was the dismissal of eight members 'to unite with others in forming a Baptist church at Newbridge under the pastoral care of Jenkin Davies.'⁵⁰ It is an intriguing entry given that the Newbridge church was already in existence. Jenkin Davies had come from Beaumaris, Anglesey, as pastor, so perhaps the eight members left Wrexham to help consolidate the beginning of his ministry. John Hughes of Glyn Ceiriog and Maurice Jones of Llangollen undertook evangelism around Rhosllanerchrugog from about 1770, but the primary use of Welsh precluded the development of any firm association with the Old Meeting. The English Baptist church in Ponciau was founded in the latter part of the nineteenth century to accommodate English speakers who had come to the area as a consequence of its industrial growth.

However deficient David Jones' English was deemed to be, he developed a useful contact with the small church at Brassey Green in rural Cheshire which, under his ministry, came to be considered as an extension of the Old Meeting. John Hughes maintained the link, becoming its pastor after the termination of his ministry in Glyn Ceiriog. Unfortunately there is no reference to it in the church book, but it could only have been for about two years up to 1776. He died on Christmas Day 1783, 'after a confinement of 6 years by a

⁴⁶ J. Davis, *History of the Welsh Baptists*, p.153.

⁴⁷ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham. Church Book p.14.

⁴⁸ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham. Church Book, p.40.

⁴⁹ Ibid,p.41.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.51

stroke of the palsy.’⁵¹ During his time at Brassey Green the church became a branch of Tarporley Baptist Church. Whilst the link with Brassey Green is only of minor consideration compared with the Shrewsbury connection which developed at the close of the century, it did form part of Joseph Jenkins’ pastoral connections within Cheshire as evidenced in both the register of births and deaths and the church book at the Old Meeting.

G.V. Price made a tenuous connection between David Jones, who had been a Calvinistic Methodist preacher in Anglesey, and the pioneering Baptist mission to Anglesey which began in 1776.⁵² According to Price, David Jones assured Joshua Thomas there were Baptists in Anglesey, so it would be easy to start a cause if they could sustain a minister. Price cites Thomas Roberts who came to Wrexham from Trehwfa Fawr asking for baptism through the influence of David Jones. B.G. Owens dates the request in 1763,⁵³ whereas Frimston believes it was 1768,⁵⁴ as did G.V. Price.⁵⁵ He returned to Anglesey but retained his membership at the Old Meeting. Price juxtaposes his death in 1775 with the commencement of the Welsh Association mission which began the following year. T.M. Bassett also refers to Thomas Roberts but adds ‘the mission to North Wales was not launched from this direction.’⁵⁶ Ironically, he died ‘without seeing the addition of a single convert to the Baptist cause in the island, and was buried at Rhos-y-meirch. A treatise entitled *Traethawd am Enaid ac Yspryd yn ôl yr Ysgrythyr*, published in 1785, is ascribed to him.’⁵⁷ According to Timothy Shenton, Thomas Llewellyn organised a mission in 1776 to Merioneth, Caernarfonshire and Anglesey for which some of the funding came from the Particular Baptist Fund.⁵⁸ T.M. Bassett suggests Thomas Llewellyn provided the money to enable Joshua Thomas and William Williams to

⁵¹ Ibid, p.44.

⁵² Price, *The Old Meeting*, pp.181, 185f.

⁵³ B.G. Owens, s.n. ‘Jones, David’, *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (London: Hon. Soc. of Cymmrodorion, 1959).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.185.

⁵⁶ Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.102.

⁵⁷ Owens, ‘David Jones’.

⁵⁸ T. Shenton, *Christmas Evans* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2001), p.95.

promote the venture.⁵⁹

A.N. Palmer thought that whilst David Jones was popular and active in the wider district, he never settled comfortably in the Old Meeting. He is considered to have had a 'successful ministry'⁶⁰ yet his relationship with the Wrexham church was not 'always satisfactory.'⁶¹ Price suggested that by 1770 there had been a number of unpleasant incidents. 'Something of a disgraceful nature took place between him and the church,'⁶² but there is no clear indication of what happened. David Jones must also be remembered for his work in building the first chapel for the Old Meeting on the site which had been purchased in Evan Jenkins' time. The rent for the barn had been reduced from £3 to £2-10-0 per annum because of its state of disrepair. He made several preaching tours to raise more money for the building which opened in 1762.

Joseph Jenkins (1743-1819)

Joseph Jenkins' ministry at the Old Meeting was, arguably, the most influential of the century.⁶³ On the positive side he consolidated the functioning of the church, although a cloud of negativity cast a shadow over his accomplishments. G.V. Price presents him favourably as 'a learned man, powerful in argument, thoroughly honest and conscientious: a man of great force of character; just and generous in his dealings with all men.'⁶⁴ A.N. Palmer also notes his 'clear and orderly mind,'⁶⁵ to which 'the precision, interdependence and completeness'⁶⁶ of Calvinism were very attractive, but adds that he was 'a rigid doctrinarian, clad in impenetrable mail from head to foot. As a disciplinarian he was strict, impartial and inflexible.'⁶⁷ There are examples of tone and language in the church book clearly illustrating Palmer's description particularly in relation to the

⁵⁹ Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.102.

⁶⁰ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.102.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² J. Davis, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.96.

⁶³ See R.T. Jenkins, s.n. 'Jenkins, Joseph', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, p.436, and J.H. Briggs, *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.29, (2004), pp.597-8.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 203.

⁶⁵ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.105.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

dissenters' burial ground dispute and matters of church discipline.

Joseph Jenkins' 'clear and orderly mind' was immediately apparent in his statement of faith given at his ordination service in 1773. It was subsequently published as a pamphlet 'for the use of the members of the church as a memento of the affecting solemnity of the service.'⁶⁸ He set out the fundamentals of his Calvinism and what should be expected from the church membership. The appointment of a pastor is the culmination of a process of mutual acceptance:

I think it but reasonable, that every congregation should be satisfied, in the religious sentiments of the minister they encourage to preach, and particularly him whom they call to be their pastor. If there is a difference between one man's views and the views of another man; the right of private judgment seems to require, that a people should be satisfied in the minister whom they are to countenance and attend upon.⁶⁹

His belief in election included a defence against the criticism of the random selection of an eternal lottery:

I can, by no means, look upon this scheme of personal election, as a decision of cruelty, and vindictive arbitrary resentment; but, on the contrary, as a scheme of undeserved mercy and love.....Why the Lord was not pleased to chuse all, I leave to his infinite wisdom, who was not obliged to chuse any.⁷⁰

The preservation of the saints required them to be separate from the world 'for the edification of the body of Christ ...and be joined in fellowship together, for the great purposes of brotherly love, and their mutual benefit.'⁷¹ In consequence, he defines the local church with a classic summary of the gathered church:

The Church of Christ does not intend any national establishment of religion: nor comprehend in its communion all the individuals of a country of every character the bad as well as the good; but is a congregation of faithful, that is goodly and upright, men in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered, according to Christ's ordinances.⁷²

⁶⁸ G.V. Price, 'Dr. Joseph Jenkins', unpublished MS (1962), Chester Street Baptist Church, p.14.

⁶⁹ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.191.

⁷⁰ *Confession of Faith* (Shrewsbury, 1772) quoted in Price, 'Dr. Joseph Jenkins', p.63.

⁷¹ Ibid, p.73.

⁷² Ibid.

The Scriptures set the pattern for the conduct of worship and the appointment of officers. He equates the biblical bishop with the pastor or elder, whilst the deacons' role is 'to serve tables, to take care of the poor, and faithfully to manage such worldly substance as may be in the church's possession,'⁷³ a traditional Baptist stance.

His first major act was the instigation of the church book as a record of meetings and procedures. It provides a detailed insight into the regular operation of a Baptist church in which the key decisions are made through the church meeting. It opens with the Church Covenant duly signed by the members on 14 September 1773 as their corporate commitment to 'free, sovereign, and efficacious grace.'⁷⁴ The church is referred to as 'The Baptist Independent Church in Wrexham' which reflects the fact that the fellowship was still an amalgam of Baptists and Independents although some of the church meeting decisions during 1775-6 indicated the Baptists were the majority grouping. The Covenant was read by the members at communion on the first Sunday of each new year. The practice is still maintained, but with the reading of a revised covenant devised for the new millennium. Both covenants are included in Appendix A.⁷⁵ The first reading of the Covenant was immediately followed by a signed declaration in which the members testified their 'hearty and unfeigned assent to the solemn profession of faith and experience therein made'.⁷⁶

Jenkins' links with the Independent chapel at Common Hall Lane in Chester played an important part in developing the ecclesiology of the Old Meeting which arose from a transfer of membership. During 1775-6 Common Hall Lane did not respond to the Old Meeting's request for the transfer of Mr. Dix and his daughter. The Old Meeting lost patience, and at a church meeting prior to the Lord's Supper on 1 March 1776 resolved that 'they will apply no more to the said Church in Common Hall Lane Chester but will receive Mr. and Miss Dix into communion, upon satisfaction obtained concerning their

⁷³ Ibid, p.79.

⁷⁴ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, copy of the Church Book, p.3.

⁷⁵ See pp.93-4.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.6.

faith experience and Christian behaviour.’⁷⁷ Nine days later, having heard the Dix’s testimony, ‘it was agreed that this Church will receive the said Mr. and Miss Dix into communion after their return from London, provided that in the meantime nothing occurs that may alter their views of them.’⁷⁸ Because Common Hall Lane was an Independent church the decision to receive the Dix’s into membership created a debate within the Old Meeting. At the church meeting of 21 April 1776 it was agreed:

this Church having been for many years, on the plan of Open or mixt Communion proposes still to continue it; and not alter the original constitution, by which Independents (believing the baptism of infants) but agreeing with us in other respects, were admitted to the Lord’s Table and other privileges of this Church.⁷⁹

The resolution went further than confirming Morgan Llwyd’s principle of open communion, by incorporating a paragraph safeguarding its position as a Baptist church. Independents would, in future, be required to sign a declaration that whilst believing in infant baptism they would endeavour to walk with their Baptist friends ‘in Brotherly love and Christian fellowship: maintaining the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of peace.’⁸⁰ The declaration also confirmed:

In case of the removal of the present or any future Pastor, this Church should become vacant, that we will consent to the settlement of a minister of the Baptist persuasion over it.⁸¹

Such a commitment was deemed to be:

reasonable, considering that there is a Paedobaptist congregation in this Town.... and that it would not be equitable to deprive our Baptist Brethren of a minister who may administer the ordinance of Baptism to them, in the way that they think most agreeable to the Word of God.⁸²

The following year John and Mary Mellor, also from Chester, ‘came before the church, and were severally examined touching their faith and Christian experience which were

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.17.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.18.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p18-19.

⁸¹ Ibid, p.19.

⁸² Ibid.

approved of by the church'⁸³ and were received into membership. There is no indication they had come from Common Hall Lane, and unlike the Dix's, there was no discussion in the church meeting as to whether or not they were paedobaptists. John Mellor is described as a 'plumber and hosier.'⁸⁴

In 1779 the Mellors requested their dismissal in order to establish a Baptist cause in Common Hall Lane, 'the Independents having built another meeting house.'⁸⁵ The church meeting agreed, adding 'we will consider that church, when settled agreeably to the order of the gospel, as a church of Jesus Christ.'⁸⁶ William Jones, who later became a publicist for the Scotch Baptists and the Campbellites⁸⁷, recorded that at this time there was 'no society of Baptists in Chester,'⁸⁸ although there were some Baptists including his future father in law. Entries in the church book confirm his statement, recording that on 2 November 1781 'Thomas Crane of the city of Chester and Mary Whalley of Road Street, Cheshire came before the church and were severally examined touching their faith and experience which was approved of.'⁸⁹ Both were baptized on 4 November and after signing the church covenant were 'admitted to the full communion of this church, it being the Lord's day for the administration of the Lord's supper.'⁹⁰

William Jones statement that 'now and then Mr. Jenkins of Wrexham came over for a Lord's Day,'⁹¹ confirms Joseph Jenkins' sporadic visits to Common Hall Lane. Jones adds that John Mellor bought the Common Hall Lane meeting.⁹² However the development of the Baptist cause took longer than was anticipated as the Mellors with three others, including Thomas Crane and Mary Whalley, made another request in 1782 'for the purpose of joining with others to form a Particular Baptist church in Common

⁸³ Ibid, p.23.

⁸⁴ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Register of Births and Deaths, p.37.

⁸⁵ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Church Book, p.27.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See Chapter Three pp. 125-133.

⁸⁸ W. Jones, *Autobiography of William Jones*, (London: Snow, 1846), p.10.

⁸⁹ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Church Book, p. 42.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ W. Jones, *Autobiography of William Jones*, p.11.

⁹² Ibid.

Hall Lane, Chester.’⁹³ Although there is no further indication in the church book of formal association with them, the Old Meeting’s register of births and deaths records twelve Chester families and one from Farndon for whom Joseph Jenkins officiated. The Walleys and the Prices, were dismissed with the Mellors⁹⁴ in 1782 to pioneer the Baptist church in Common Hall Lane.

In addition to his ordination confession of faith, and the Church Covenant together with its concomitant declaration, the orderliness of Joseph Jenkins’ mind is also evident in his reorganisation of the trust deeds. A detailed doctrinal definition was inserted into the deed of 4 March 1778.⁹⁵ The members, including the pastor, are described as:

antipaedobaptist professing the doctrine of the co-equal Trinity of the Godhead, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, personal and unconditional election to eternal life and the final perseverance of the saints.⁹⁶

The church covenant of 1773, although a fairly detailed Calvinistic statement of faith, required members to observe the ‘ordinances of Christ’, but does not specifically refer to baptism by immersion. The covenant served more as a theological bond of fellowship in contrast to the legally specific definitions of the new trust deeds which incorporated the requirement that future ministers must be of the ‘antipaedobaptist persuasion respecting church government.’⁹⁷ A.N. Palmer makes the point with reference to the clear Baptist position of the new deeds rather than the general Calvinistic statement of the 1773 covenant, that never before in the history of the Old Meeting had there been any ‘specific doctrine or set of doctrines to which the church was committed.’⁹⁸ Given Joseph Jenkins ‘tidy mind’ and how in Palmer’s assessment he was also a ‘rigid doctrinarian’,⁹⁹ the content of the new deeds is hardly a surprise. It reflects a progression in the mind of Joseph Jenkins from the statement of faith he presented at his ordination, anticipating the follow-through in the deeds of 1778. It would be logical to ask whether the inclusion of a

⁹³ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Church Book , p.43.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Price, ‘Dr. Joseph Jenkins’, p.25.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 25-6.

⁹⁷ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.216.

⁹⁸ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p. 107.

⁹⁹ Ibid p.105.

trinitarian formula, 'professing the doctrine of co-equal Trinity in Unity'¹⁰⁰ was a deliberate counter to the Arian sympathies of the New Meeting as expressed in the ministries of John Kenrick and Francis Boulton? Be that as it may, it can be affirmed Baptist influence had now evolved to the point at which the Old Meeting had declared itself to be a Baptist church.

It is possible the source of the bitter dispute over the dissenters' burying ground lay in Joseph Jenkins' reorganization of the trust deeds which, in 1779, included appointing cemetery trustees. The Presbyterians had also used it over the years, but the Baptists had adopted a laissez-faire attitude to the fees. The matter surfaced at a church meeting on 4 April 1774 and continued at increasingly acrimonious intervals culminating in the litigation of 1788.

At a church meeting in 1774 a report was given that 'through too great indulgence and neglect for some years past several abuses have been introduced respecting the internment of persons in the burying-ground.'¹⁰¹ The meeting agreed dissenters could be interred. If permission had not been sought the fee was five shillings. If permission was obtained from the deacons, trustees, or minister the fee was three shillings. The management of the cemetery was left to 'our brother William Lloyd'¹⁰² and that 'in all cases of difficulty he appeal to the church.'¹⁰³ Funerals on the Lord's Day were discouraged 'as it is very inconvenient.'¹⁰⁴

The issue lay dormant until September 1779 when it was reported that 'the Presbyterian congregation in this town have made a disturbance and threatened us with law, concerning the exclusive property of this church in the burying ground.'¹⁰⁵ The church determined to assert its right to the cemetery together with 'the disposal of the key, the appointment of the grave digger, and the settlement of the rates of burial', and 'no other

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.107

¹⁰¹ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Church Book, p.11.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.12.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.13.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p.29.

congregation or church can with justice impinge on this right.’¹⁰⁶ In November 1780 the Old Meeting acted on a recommendation to produce a detailed statement to give ‘a true state of our right and title to the Burying Ground.’¹⁰⁷ There is no indication as to the source of the recommendation. ‘Till very lately’¹⁰⁸ ownership had never been disputed. Very few Presbyterians ‘desired to be buried in the Burying Ground ...their principal people and some of their former ministers ...were buried in the Parish churchyard,’¹⁰⁹ although John Kenrick had been interred in the cemetery ‘by permission of the Old Meeting.’¹¹⁰ The words ‘Old Meeting’ are underscored by way of emphasis.

The Old Meeting had managed the graveyard and borne the cost of repairs, ‘nor did the New Meeting ever interfere in these concerns, or ever contribute anything towards the said repairs.’¹¹¹ Trees had been cut down to provide timber for the new chapel opened in 1762, and the ground had been let out by the Old Meeting congregation who had sold the grass and hay ‘sometimes even to members of the New Meeting.’¹¹² Although part of the abuse had included the interment of non-dissenters which had been stopped by the action of the church meeting in 1774, the key principle was financial. Their uninterrupted possession was deemed to secure ‘an exclusive property’¹¹³ so that ‘as in former times no one be permitted to bury therein, without paying an acknowledgement for the favour.’¹¹⁴

Attitudes hardened at a church meeting on 30 March 1785. The Presbyterians were accused of pretending to have a share in the ground and the meeting recommended ‘utmost caution against such mistaken notions and encroachments,’¹¹⁵ because ‘concessions to the Presbyterians ‘respecting the burial of their dead in future ...is utterly improper.’¹¹⁶ Requests from the Presbyterians ‘however artfully worded, are ensnaring,

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid, p.33.
108 Ibid, p.34.
109 Ibid, p.35.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid, p.36.
112 Ibid, p.36.
113 Ibid, p.37.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid, p.48.
116 Ibid.

and put with a view to inveigle the church'¹¹⁷ into conceding a right of burial. With regard to the new Methodist cause, the only burials permitted are to be from 'the two ancient congregations of Dissenters,'¹¹⁸ and any minister from any other church 'shall never be permitted to speak over the grave in the said ground.'¹¹⁹ These decisions were not reached 'out of enmity, or a desire of returning evil for evil, but as steps necessary for the preservation of their own property.'¹²⁰ Attention returned to the Presbyterians in March 1786. In addition to non-payment of their dues they were accused of renegeing on the payment of the threepence stamp duty which from 1 October 1785 had become payable to the government.¹²¹ The meeting agreed both stamp duty and fees must be paid 'previous to their obtaining any grave.'¹²²

The climax to the affair came at the Great Sessions held in Wrexham on 18 March 1788. The Baptists had locked the gate to the burying ground but the Presbyterians forced their entry. Consequently Joseph Jenkins, acting under the deed of 1779, brought an action for trespass against William Kenrick the fourth son of former minister John Kenrick, his nephew James Kenrick of Wynne Hall, Francis Edwards, weaver, Richard Humphreys and John Rees.¹²³ After lengthy proceedings the two Meetings finally reached a settlement in which the Presbyterians 'shall have a right of being buried as heretofore', and may possess one key.'¹²⁴ The fees, 2/- for every man 1/6 for every woman, and 1/- for every child under the age of ten years, must be paid to the grave-maker. The present and future members of the Old Meeting, or such person as shall be by them appointed, were entitled to the pasture, trees and herbage. It was for the Baptists to appoint the grave-digger and manage the cemetery as they deemed fit. Ministers, irrespective of church, could speak over the graves of their friends.

117 Ibid.
 118 Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Church Book, p.49.
 119 Ibid.
 120 Ibid.
 121 Ibid, p.58.
 122 Ibid.
 123 Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p. 108.
 124 Ibid pp.108, 109.

G.V. Price attempts to present the outcome more favourably for the Old Meeting as ownership of the burial ground was proved in their favour, whilst right of burial was acceded to the Presbyterians and others upon payment to the Baptist church of the prescribed fees.¹²⁵ A.N. Palmer presents a more considered reflection. He believed it was just that ownership by the Old Meeting was recognized, and that the Presbyterians could use the cemetery subject to payment of the fees. However he regarded the attitude of the Baptists in refusing any right of burial to the Independents of Penybryn quite unjust. He does not equate them, as Price did, with those who left the Old Meeting in 1715 following the baptism of John Williams, but as part of the New Meeting that broke away when the Presbyterians became more Arian and Arminian. That, for Palmer meant they reflected an arm of the original Old Meeting. The 'Independents of Penybryn were in doctrine (that is in respect of the point of baptism), more truly representative of the founders of that meeting than the Baptists were, and had in equity, as good a right as they to be buried there.'¹²⁶ Palmer considered the Old Meeting had been more of an Independent cause which turned Baptist rather than a numerically balanced dual fellowship, although from the baptism of John Williams and the ministries of Evan Jenkins and David Jones, coupled with the membership requirements concerning Mr. Dix and his daughter and the sending of the Mellors to establish a Baptist cause in Chester would suggest otherwise.

The vindictiveness reflected in the church book indicates more than an enthusiasm for the payment of fees, responsibility for maintenance, or even a sense of guilt from the failure to collect the fees. Given the apparent improvement of relationships with the New Meeting during the course of the century it has to be asked whether the matter could have been resolved through negotiation, and the question posed by the quasi-legal language of the relevant minutes is whether Joseph Jenkins might have made a better solicitor than a pastor.

¹²⁵ G.V. Price, 'The Dissenters' Burial Ground', unpublished MS (1959), Chester St. Baptist Church Wrexham pp.8f.

¹²⁰ Palmer, *The Older Nonconformity of Wrexham*, p.109.

The format with regard to applications for baptism and membership, typical of contemporary Baptist practice, was set early in Joseph Jenkins' ministry by the following entry:

At a Church Meeting, Lord's Day. November 7th, 1773. Edward Davies, Joseph Baumer, James Maddock, Mary Perry, Mary Jenkins, Anna Jenkins and Hannah Jones (having been severally at different Church meetings examined as to their faith and experience; submitted to the ordinance of baptism last Friday Nov 5th and signed the Church Covenant) were all this day received into the Church and admitted to Communion.¹²⁷

Occasionally further information was required. At a church meeting on 31 October 1781 Anne Davies, whose husband John Davies was in membership, gave account of her faith and experience 'when it was agreed that the further consideration of her case be referred to another Church Meeting.'¹²⁸ Her application was reconsidered on 1 February 1782 when 'the account she gave of herself being unanimously approved of, and she having signed the church covenant, it was agreed she be baptized next Lord's day and received into full communion.'¹²⁹ No explanation is given why further consideration was required. Occasionally an application appeared to have pastoral ramifications. On 7 August 1785 Frances Jones senior was 'examined touching her faith and experience,'¹³⁰ but the entry raises more questions than answers:

The said Frances Jones having for several years solicited to become a member of the Church, and still persisting notwithstanding many discouragements from our people and allurements from other quarters, the Church does charitably hope that her knowledge and belief of the truth is genuine, tho' her inability of reading and incapacity of utterance prevent her expressing it to others and therefore agreed that she with William Baugh be baptised in this place tomorrow evening.¹³¹

The church book offers no explanation of the discouragements and the external allurements beyond her illiteracy, but it is possible she was the mother of Frances Jones whose behaviour had created a scandal in 1776.

Amongst the miscellany of entries, there was an annual collection between 1775 and 1787

¹²⁷ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Church Book, p.10.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p.41f.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.43.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.50.

¹³¹ Ibid.

for the Particular Baptist Fund. The first amounted to one guinea, it peaked at £1-5-0d in 1777, and for the last five years the recorded sum remained at 10/6d. During most years there were days set aside for prayer and fasting. 13 December 1776 had been set apart for national fasting and prayer by royal proclamation. 'The same was solemnly observed in our Church on our own account and on account of our National affairs.'¹³² No details are given but the entry could be a reference to the American Declaration of Independence made on 4 July.

Christmas day 1778 was nationally observed as a day of leisure, but in the Old Meeting it was 'observed as a day of prayer to implore the blessing of God on our Church and his kind interposition in the present melancholy state of our national affairs.'¹³³ Sadly no reference is made as to what they were. 17 July 1779 was a day 'appointed in association by the Baptist Church throughout Wales'¹³⁴ for fasting and prayer with the comment 'the same was observed in our church beginning at 7 o'clock in the morning.'¹³⁵ Church is not the normal collective noun by which Baptists describe themselves. Its use in a parallel manner to the Presbyterian or Anglican church is an interesting reference to contemporary Baptist life in Wales given its fragmented nature through the independence of each local church, the division between Particular and General Baptists, and that the Old Meeting did not belong to the Welsh Association. Perhaps there was no other word to use. Denomination reflects later developments. The Welsh Union was not formed until 1866, and although the English Union was formed in 1832, the present BUGB was not formed until 1891 through the merging of the Particular and General Baptists.

Under Joseph Jenkins' leadership the theology of church discipline was set out in a lengthy resolution at a church meeting on 31 March 1775.¹³⁶ Having 'professed to come out of the world' members have given themselves to God and each other so can not 'consistently with such a profession rend themselves from the communion and discipline of the Church'. Dissatisfaction with other members must be expressed in accordance

¹³² Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Church Book, p.23.

¹³³ Ibid, p.26.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p.28.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

with the rules of the Gospel as indicated in Matthew 18:15-17. Membership could not be terminated by resignation as ‘the only scriptural method of discontinuing a connection with this Church is by dismissal to another Church’, and regular absence from communion will be dealt with ‘agreeably to the order of the Gospel.’

There were three noteworthy examples of church discipline. The first occurred in May 1776. The behaviour of Frances Jones had offended several members which ‘caused the church to withhold her from communion.’¹³⁷ The ‘messengers’, in eighteenth century usage the equivalent of present day ‘church visitors’, appointed to interview her reported that ‘a connection was proved to have subsisted between the said Frances Jones and a very profligate young man of this town,’¹³⁸ which had at first been covered up but subsequently brought ‘public dishonour and reproach of religion in the town.’¹³⁹ Consequently the meeting voted that she ‘be laid aside from the communion of this church, till such time as it shall appear that God gives her repentance.’¹⁴⁰ There were ramifications in October when it came to light that there had been a ‘criminal connection’¹⁴¹ between Joseph Bawmer, also a church member who had privately left the country, and Frances Jones. The offence was not disclosed and Bawmer was suspended from communion until he repented. It also appeared that another member, Anne Wynn, was implicated there being reason to suspect that she ‘has been accessory to countenancing the above persons in their sins,’¹⁴² and was ‘suspended from communion till her innocence in this matter is manifest or it shall please God to give her repentance.’¹⁴³ Five years later, in 1781, the church was satisfied of her innocence and restored her to communion.¹⁴⁴ That members were assumed guilty until proven innocent is a far cry from current practices in discipleship and pastoral care.

136 Ibid, p.15.

137 Ibid, p.20.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid, p.21.

141 Ibid, p.22.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid, p.39.

Some attempt at pastoral care is evidenced in the case of John Williams in 1780. His withdrawal from attending had caused offence. Three appointed 'messengers' reported to the church meeting how he had behaved to them 'in a very rude and indecent manner.'¹⁴⁵ Joseph Jenkins had also tried to talk with him but had been rebuffed 'in a most naughty, yet vulgar strain.' Williams 'indulged a most abusive spirit of railing, tho' he could not point out wherein the Church had injured him.'¹⁴⁶ The problem was persistent breaking the Lord's Day 'by going to the ale house'¹⁴⁷ as well as drinking at home. The meeting considered 'every lenient method taken by the Church for his restoration had been ineffectual'¹⁴⁸ so decided that he be 'put away from the communion of this Church, till it appears that God gives him repentance.'¹⁴⁹

An unusual disciplinary case occurred in the spring of 1784. In March the church book records 'The church agreed several resolutions', none of them specified, 'respecting Daniel Roberts to be proposed to our country brethren if they come to town agreeably to intimation given them for that purpose.'¹⁵⁰ On 4 April they were present when:

it was agreed that Daniel Roberts did carelessly rent himself from the communion of this church about May or June 1776 - hath ever since been out of communion - and hath discovered a temper of mind, in which the Church could not consider him as a member of it.¹⁵¹

It seems strange the issue had been allowed to drift for eight years. His absence does not appear in earlier entries and no explanation is offered. So for whatever reason, Daniel Roberts 'being still unconvinced of his error',¹⁵² the church's decision was formally to 'continue him from communion, till it shall please God to restore him by repentance.'¹⁵³

There is no indication as to where the country brethren lived: whether Newbridge, Glyn Ceiriog, or the rural fringes of what was then a small country town. The register of births

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.38.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p.45.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

and deaths indicates that the membership was spread across a wide area. Places mentioned within the immediate locality of Wrexham town include Broughton, Minera, Abenbury, Bersham, and Marchwiell. The register of births and deaths confirms Joseph Jenkins maintained contact with the Baptist cause in Common Hall Lane and several other Chester families, in addition to those who were sent to Chester in 1782, are included. More distant places include Oswestry, Caerwys in Flintshire, Shrewsbury (twice) and Manchester (once).

G.V. Price thought one of the noteworthy aspects of Joseph Jenkins' ministry was his instigation of the dedication of children. He cites the entry for Joseph Jenkins' own daughter, Anna, who was born 'at half an hour after twelve o'clock at noon on 5 December 1786, and dedicated the twenty fifth day of the same month by the said Joseph Jenkins, Baptist Minister in Wrexham.'¹⁵⁴ However Price has omitted the final part of the entry: 'Paid 3d,'¹⁵⁵ which was the standard entry for all the births and deaths within the register reflecting the fee payable to the exchequer. As no details of the act of dedication have survived, it has to be asked to what extent the dedication was a precursor to the current Baptist practice of presenting, blessing and dedicating infants, or whether dedication was used as a synonym for registration? The first entry, Sarah Bailey, indicates that she was registered.¹⁵⁶ Subsequent birth entries give both the dates of birth and dedication. The word 'registration' is not used but 'paid 3d' completes each entry. If dedication was more than a synonym for registration, further speculation wonders whether it was introduced as a Baptist alternative to infant baptism as practised at the New Meeting.

When Joseph Jenkins left Wrexham in 1794, the Old Meeting experienced several years of decline. The church appointed one of its own members, twenty-seven year old Robert Roberts, as pastor. He was a deacon and worked as a weaver in Rhosddu, but from the lack of references to him in the church book it seems that he had not been prominent in

¹⁵⁴ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.198.

¹⁵⁵ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, Register of Births and Deaths, p.51.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.37.

church affairs. The reasons for his appointment are not given. No indication has emerged as to how he became influenced by Sandemanianism. It can be assumed from his age that he had grown up under the ministry of Joseph Jenkins who, despite his scholarly interests, had in no way been influenced by Glas and MacLean. Under the influence of Joseph Jenkins' legalistic frame of mind, Roberts might have been attracted by their pedantic logic. It is also possible that the Sandemanian link came through Thomas Crane. If he was the same Roberts Roberts who signed the church covenant in 1779, he would have been fifteen. Thomas Crane became a member in 1781, and although he moved to Chester in 1782 it is possible he maintained a contact with Roberts. As a bookseller, Crane could have come across Sandeman's *Letters on Theron and Aspasio* published in 1757 in which he took issue with the devotional writer James Hervey, attacked the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and propounded the Glasite intellectualist view of faith.¹⁵⁷ Sandeman's *Thoughts on Christianity* published in 1762, could also have been obtained by Crane and passed on to Roberts.

Robert Roberts' rise from obscurity and his adoption of Sandemanianism became doubly significant for the wider Baptist life of North Wales in general, and the Old Meeting in particular. Timothy Shenton refers to the meeting between Robert Roberts and J.R. Jones of Ramoth, leader of the North Wales Sandemanians, at the North Wales Association in Glyn Ceiriog in 1793. Roberts mentioned 'the anti-revivalist ideas of these Scottish nonconformists (i.e.Glas, Sandeman and MacLean) and helped him to acquire some of their writings.'¹⁵⁸ G.V. Price was more explicit, stating Robert Roberts 'gave Rev. J.R. Jones his first book on the peculiar beliefs of the Sandemanian Movement.'¹⁵⁹ Price however does not reveal the source of his information.

The principal feature of Sandemanianism was its reduction of faith to intellectual assent. John Glas (1695-1773) was originally a Scottish Presbyterian minister, and became the

¹⁵⁷ D.B. Murray, s.n. 'Sandeman, Robert (1718-1771)', *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.48 pp. 857-8.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.160.

¹⁵⁹ Price. 'Servants of God', p.16.

father-in-law of Robert Sandeman(1718-71) who was a linen manufacturer who later served Glasite churches in Scotland and London before moving to New England. He is regarded as the principal exponent of Glas's views. Timothy Shenton analyses Sandemanianism in so far as it affected the ministry of Christmas Evans. In Shenton's view 'In an effort to safeguard the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he (Glas) redefined faith as bare intellectual assent to certain facts.'¹⁶⁰ Archibald MacLean (1733-1812), who was born in Lanarkshire, came under Sandemanian influence in 1762. The following year he became a Baptist but his theology remained Sandemanian. The basic tenet of faith for MacLean was 'a simple belief in the testimony of God about his Son.'¹⁶¹ Faith was an act of mind. As a consequence he discarded the calling of sinners to faith and thought it wrong to press for repentance. A conviction of sin was unnecessary as 'a mere unmoved acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord was sufficient for salvation.'¹⁶² J.R. Jones of Ramoth (1765-1822), who by his force of personality was an influential and powerful preacher, became attracted by what he considered to be MacLean's simple presentation of apostolic Christianity. J.R. Jones' fascination with MacLean eventually led in 1798 to his separation from what he called the 'Babylonian Baptists' of Wales.

A consequence of Sandemanianism was a serious loss of evangelistic endeavour which is clearly exemplified in Christmas Evans' reflections on his Sandemanian experience which had 'extinguished the spirit of prayer for the conversion of the ungodly. The weightier things of the Kingdom of heaven became weaker in their influences on my mind than the lesser things.'¹⁶³ He had lost 'nearness to God',¹⁶⁴ and whilst he argued with his conscience that he still 'preached the Word', he adds 'I was thus deprived of the spirit of prayer and the spirit of preaching.'¹⁶⁵ His reflections also regretted the debilitating effect on the churches. 'The poison penetrated four counties, Anglesea,

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p.154

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.156.

¹⁶² Ibid, p.157

¹⁶³ D.R. Stephen, *Memoirs of Christmas Evans* (London: Alott and Jones, 1847), p.56.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.57

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Caernarvon, Merioneth, and Denbigh.’¹⁶⁶ The consequences were ‘to send away the hearers of the gospel,’¹⁶⁷ many of whom defected to other denominations where ‘they had rest from the condemnatory spirit amongst us.’¹⁶⁸

Robert Roberts’ influence on the Old Meeting was disastrous. By the time he resigned in 1802 the church was almost at the point of extinction. The congregation had dwindled so much that regular Sunday services could not be held, and the church would have closed completely but for the arrival from Manchester of John and Mary Ratcliffe, of whom nothing else is known. They, with a few others, sought the help of John Palmer of Shrewsbury who visited Wrexham several times before arranging for Richard Price of Newtown to undertake a twelve month probationary pastorate.¹⁶⁹ In effect, the Old Meeting had a new beginning which, through the Shrewsbury connection, led to membership with the Shropshire Association. This connexion lasted until 1915 when the church was persuaded to join the Lancashire and Cheshire Association.

Conclusion

During the overall stability of the eighteenth century geography had linked the Wrexham church with Chester and Shrewsbury, as well as with Newbridge, Glyn Ceiriog and Nantwich. The Shrewsbury connection which rescued the church from closure resulted in membership with the Shropshire Association which lasted just over a hundred years. Over time associational links with Newbridge and Glyn Ceiriog were loosened by language, the differences between Particular and General Baptists and possibly, in the case of John Hughes, by the practice of the laying on of hands. The Old Meeting’s practice of open communion, which was probably part of the surviving legacy from Morgan Llwyd, prevented formal membership with the Welsh Association. Through the influence of Joseph Jenkins the church evolved from a mixed fellowship of Baptists and Independents to a fully fledged Baptist church.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.221.

APPENDIX A

The Covenant of 1773

WE, the Underwritten, Members of the *Baptist Independent Church in Wrexham* professing the Belief of the Doctrines of free, sovereign, and efficacious Grace, do acknowledge the Riches of that Grace of God in providing a Saviour for us *wretched sinners*, even the *Lord Jesus Christ* : his goodness in sending the Gospel to us, at the ends of the earth; giving us some experience of the power of that Gospel in our souls (thro' sacred operations of His Holy Spirit), humbling, comforting, charging, renewing us, calling us to be a part of His church in this world ; and fixing a Pastor over us ; & we *do now* in the *Name* and in the *Fear of God*, give up ourselves to the Lord and to one another by the Will of God; desiring to walk together in *Church Fellowship* according to the Rules of the Gospel, that is to say—conscientiously to sanctify the Lord's Day; to attend on the publick preaching of the Word and the administration of the *Ordinances of Christ* Church meetings and meetings of prayer, unless some *Unavoidable* Hindrance prevent; to walk with and watch over one another in love; endeavouring in the strength of divine grace to *Maintain the Unity of the Spirit* in the Bond of peace, to keep up the life of Religion in our own souls, the exercise of daily prayer in private and in our Families (not forgetting, at such seasons, the peace and prosperity of Zion, and of our own Church and Pastor in particular) ; and to walk uprightly and circumspectly our own Families and before the world, That others may see our good works, and may glorify our Father who is in Heaven. Amen !

The Covenant of 2000

Having received Christ as my Lord and Saviour and been baptized, and being in agreement with the Church's statements, strategy, and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Sprit to unite with this Church family. In doing so I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following.

I will protect the unity of my Church
By acting in love toward other members
By refusing to gossip
By following the leaders

I will share the responsibility of my Church
By praying for its growth
By inviting the un-churched to attend

By warmly welcoming those who visit

**I will serve the ministry of this Church
By discovering my gifts and talents
By being equipped to serve by my pastors**

**I will support the testimony of my Church
By attending faithfully
By living a good life
By giving regularly**

SUMMARY OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

CHAPTER TWO CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

KEY PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE OLD MEETING

Thomas Crane	Member who was dismissed with others to establish a Particular Baptist church in Chester. He became the father in law of William Jones who served the Scotch Baptists and for a time was influenced by the Campbellites.
Evan Jenkins	Minister from 1740-1752.
David Jones	Minister from 1755-1770
Joseph Jenkins	Son of Evan Jenkins. Minister from 1773-1798.
John Hughes	First minister in Glyn Ceiriog. Transferred membership to Wrexham in 1775. Developed a short pastorate at Brassey Green prior to becoming ill.
John Palmer	Baptist minister in Shrewsbury who frequently aided the Old Meeting.
Robert Roberts	A member who succeeded Joseph Jenkins as minister.

KEY PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE NEW MEETING

John Kenrick	Minister from 1707 – 1745.
Francis Boulton	Minister from 1745 – 1787.

PLACES OF NOTE

Brassey Green

Small village near Tarporley in West Cheshire.

Glyn Ceiriog

Rural village. The Ceiriog valley runs north west of Chirk.

Nantwich

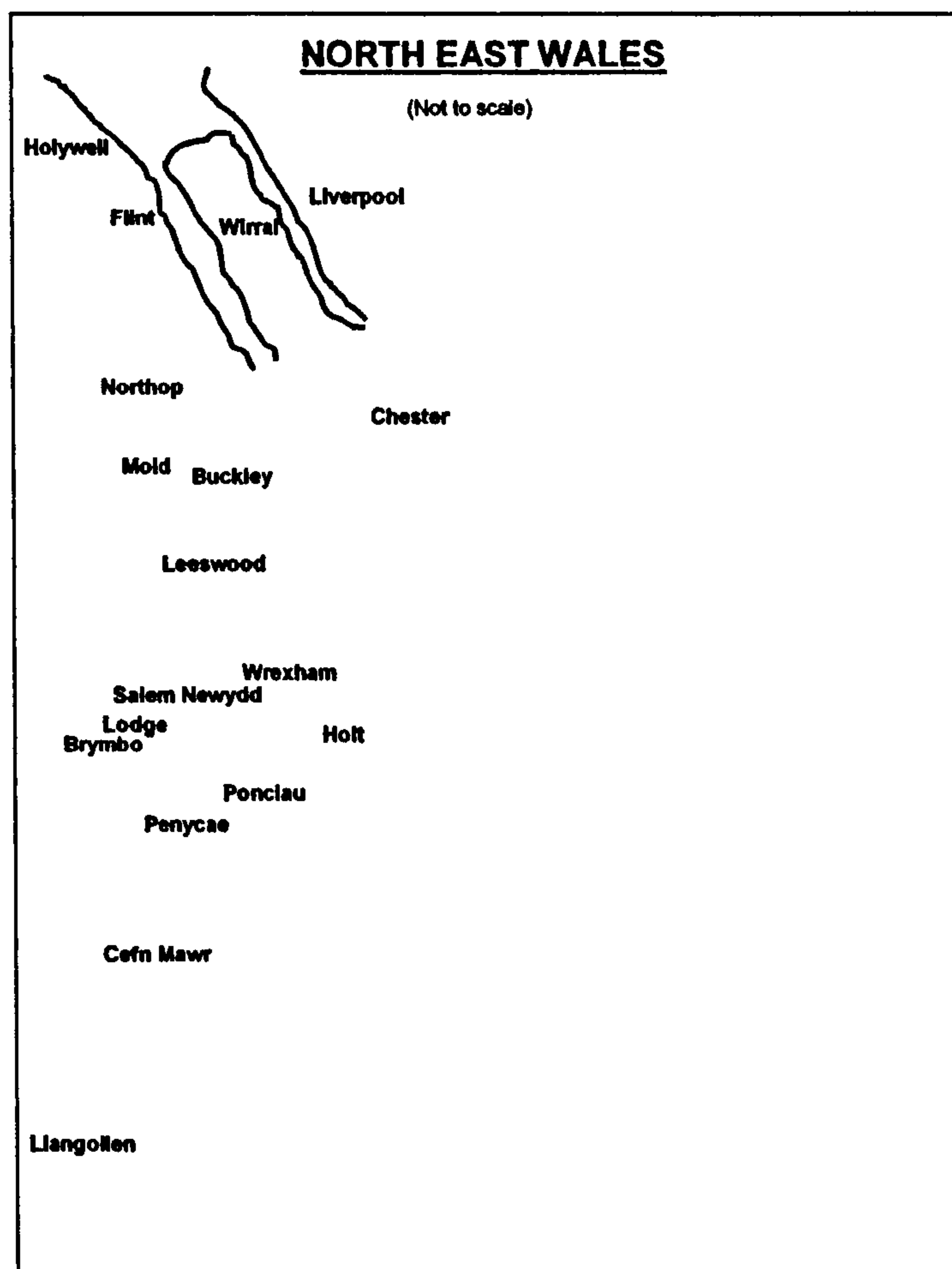
Early links with north east Wales aided the developments in Newbridge and Glyn Ceiriog.

Newbridge

Village on the river Dee c. 10 miles south of Wrexham

CHAPTER THREE

NORTH EAST WALES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY



Introduction

The great bulk of English Baptist life in North Wales came to the fore during the nineteenth century as illustrated in Tables 4 - 6. Fifteen of the English Baptist Churches were formed in the century compared with one in Wrexham in the seventeenth century, two at Newbridge and Glyn Ceiriog during the eighteenth, and three in the twentieth at Shotton, Llay and Llanelwy. Consequently nineteenth century development is considered in the two geographical halves that have come to dominate the working of the NWEBU, namely the industrial northeast and the coast.

The growth of the English Baptist churches within the century needs to be placed within the wider context of two primal regional influences. The first was the surge of industrialisation. Mining, iron manufacturing and their related industries transformed much of the landscape and social infrastructure of North East Wales as they had in the valleys of South Wales. The coming of the railway made Holyhead the principal port for Ireland, and developed the coastal villages of Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno into holiday resorts for the North West and the Midlands. The second was an emerging national consciousness which primarily expressed itself in a multi-faceted political engagement. Amongst the principal issues were education, temperance, and the relationship between nonconformity and the Anglican Church particularly through the campaign for disestablishment. The defence of the Welsh language in the face of a perception of rampant anglicisation also played a dominant role. In the latter part of the century political commitment produced the description of Welsh nonconformity being the Liberal party at prayer. In North Wales these wider national issues are more clearly seen in the longer standing and more politically aware churches of the north east and the individual contribution of Simon Jones of Wrexham, than in the churches of the coastal tourist towns.

It can be argued that theologically nineteenth-century Welsh nonconformity was little different from English nonconformity but culturally they were worlds apart. Welsh national consciousness was growing apace mainly through a dawning perception of English domination and oppression socially, ecclesiastically, and politically. In an election address to the voters of Merthyr Tydfil in November 1868 Henry Richard declared:

The people who speak this language (Welsh), who read this literature, who own this history, who inherit these traditions, who venerate these names, who created and sustain these marvelous religious organizations, the people forming three fourths of the people of Wales – have they not a right to say to this small propertied class.....We are the Welsh people and not you? This country is ours and not yours, and therefore we claim to have our principles and sentiments and

feelings represented in the Common House of Parliament.¹

The principal elements of protest and reaction were social, educational, political, and religious, but not necessarily in that order because the process was one of regional osmosis within significant geographical variations. G.I.T. Machin draws the threads together in a simple yet comprehensive statement that 'allegiance to the chapels was an additional way of drawing a line between the lower orders, Welsh-speaking and economically subjugated, and the elite landowners who were ...English-speaking Anglicans.'² It would be misleading to ascribe the entry in the 1836 annual report of the Baptist Union that 'it is with regret that the committee of the Baptist Union announce their inability to furnish a list of Welsh churches,'³ to an incipient feeling of resentment towards English bureaucracy by the Welsh or the failure to comprehend Cymric sensibility by the English. The simple reason offered was an inability 'to obtain more than one letter in reply to their enquiries.'⁴ However the statement does offer a pointer to general difficulties in communication as the century progressed.

The age old dilemma is between how much socio-political economics shaped Welsh nonconformity and the extent to which nonconformity shaped the world in which it found itself. The answer is not found causally at either end of the spectrum of influence but somewhere in the middle with the point of balance reflecting individual predilections with regard to the evidence. Beneath all the events within the churches such as the founding of new causes, the comings and goings of ministers, and the rise and fall of membership rolls, there were significant undercurrents that determined the lie of the sandbanks and the depths of the channels where the river of Baptist life met the sea of national consciousness on the shore of industrialization and rural reorientation. The high

¹ *Aberdare Times*, 14 Nov. 1868. Quoted by K.O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963), p. v.

² G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 3, quoting G. Day & M. Fitton, 'Religion and Social Status in Rural Wales', in *Sociological Review*, NS xxiii (1975), p.885.

³ *Baptist Union Annual Report* (1836), p.52.

⁴ *Ibid.*

water mark of Welsh nonconformity in the second half of the century became far more than the crescendos of the preacher's 'hwyl', and the choral power of 'gymanfa ganu' within the walls of the chapel. They reverberated outside to challenge the heart of national as well as local life. They demanded moral reform through the growth of the temperance movement, social justice principally through alliance with the Liberal Party, educational parity for religious instruction in schools, and ecclesiastical parity through the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales.

The nonconformist sense of zeal and purpose reached a campaigning peak across Wales and England in some of the utterances of the Carmarthen born Methodist Hugh Price Hughes. 'We Christians when we unite our forces are simply irresistible. Let us then combine heartily to abolish slavery, drunkenness, lust, gambling, ignorance, pauperism, mammonism and war. After that is done we shall not have much difficulty in settling all our theological and ecclesiastical difficulties.'⁵ Within Wales the nonconformist vision of building the new Jerusalem seemed to be in reach because 'the alliance of the nonconformists with the Liberal party under Bright and Gladstone gave dissent a political instrument as it had never had since the seventeenth century commonwealth.'⁶ This was the pulpit of certainty from which Hugh Price Hughes could proclaim that what was morally wrong can never be politically right. The context of the remark was his withdrawal of support for Parnell on the grounds of the involvement of the leader for Irish home rule in the divorce of Mrs. Katherine O'Shea whom he married in 1891 after a prolonged affair.

North Wales may not have had nonconformists with the national stature of Spurgeon, John Clifford, R.W. Dale or Hugh Price Hughes. Nevertheless there were significant ministries from the Baptists of Cefn Mawr, and Wrexham. Evan Evans consolidated Welsh Baptist witness in Cefn Mawr resulting in the formation of Capel Seion which was further developed by A.J. Parry who played a key role in the formation of Ebenezer

⁵ G. Rupp, 'Evangelicalism of the Nonconformists' in *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: a series of talks on the BBC Third Programme* (London: Sylvan Press, 1949), p.109 .

⁶ Ibid, p.111.

English Baptist Church. Gethin Davies, when Principal of the North Wales Baptist College in Llangollen, had an effective ministry amongst the churches of the area on both sides of the linguistic divide. Ebenezer, Buckley, and Ebenezer, Mold, were greatly indebted to his influence as was Chester Street, Wrexham. At Chester Street itself, George Sayce's ministry in the first half of the century established several preaching stations, and towards the end of the century Philip Hudgell and Hobson Thomas had short but significant ministries. Alderman Simon Jones made a major contribution to civic affairs in the final quarter of the century.

The North Wales Baptist College, Llangollen

Before examining the development of the churches it is appropriate to consider the role played by the North Wales Baptist College which was established in Llangollen in 1862, prior to its move to Bangor in 1892. Initially the college catered for Welsh-speaking students. However, through the contribution of its third principal, Gethin Davies, it had a lasting positive effect on at least four of the English churches as well as Ebenezer in Mold which eventually became an English language church.

Gethin Davies (1846-96) was a native of Aberdulais Glamorganshire who was brought up in the Swansea valley. He trained for ministry at Bristol Baptist college and took a London University degree. He was appointed tutor with responsibility for teaching classics and New Testament Greek. He became the college's third principal following the death of Hugh Jones in 1883.⁷ It was Davies more than anyone, who was aware of the need to cater for an increasingly diverse population linguistically, and was keen to involve the college in the missionary work of the churches.

The need for a ministerial training college in North Wales was encouraged and considered

⁷ For Davies and his predecessors, John Pritchard (1796-187) and Hugh Jones (1831-83), see E. Cefni Jones, *Hanes Coleg y Bedyddwyr yng Ngogledd Cymru 1862-1927* (Blaenau Ffestiniog: J.D. Davies, 1928), pp.43-68. Davies and Pritchard are listed in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*.

from time to time particularly by the Denbigh, Flint and Merioneth Association. In T.M. Bassett's opinion it was the enthusiasm arising from the bicentenary of 1662 'which finally got the project off the ground.'⁸ The decision to start the college was taken in Bangor by representatives of the three North Wales Associations on 3 February 1862. It opened on 24 August. It was only after the formation of the University College of North Wales at Bangor in 1884, that there was talk about moving the college to the university, a move which eventually happened in 1892.

The choice of Llangollen for its location offers an interesting insight into the cultural thinking of the North Wales Baptist churches at this time. Llangollen was chosen for two reasons. Firstly it was the home of John Pritchard, a long respected Baptist campaigner and teacher, who was appointed as the first principal. Secondly a deliberate decision was made to place the college in an area which was becoming anglicized so that the students could improve their English. In order to qualify as a candidate for the college each prospective student had to pass a 'satisfactory examination'⁹ in five subjects. First on the list was English and Welsh grammar.¹⁰ It might be considered linguistically significant that in the college rules and regulations the order of language was English before Welsh. It could be implied that some students may have thought preaching in English was of secondary importance. However rule four, under the heading of 'Supplies', stated 'no student able to preach in English will be excused from taking an English supply on the ground that he has no sermon.'¹¹ T.M. Bassett expressed the view that when the college opened 'the students would be of some use in establishing English causes in the area,'¹² as happened at Zion, Penycae. Bassett adds when the college moved to Bangor in 1892 'Gethin Davies could say no more about the status of the (English) language than that it was used in sermon class.'¹³

⁸ T.M. Bassett, *The Welsh Baptist* (Swansea: Ilston Press, 1977), p.197: cf. E. Cefni Jones, *Hanes*, pp.18-42.

⁹ Bangor University Archives, X/EL205, The North Wales Baptist College Llangollen. The Rules and Regulations 1887, p.1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 4.

¹² Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.320.

¹³ Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.320 quoting *Seren Cymru*, 26 Mehefen 1891.

The college was not as peripheral as might be assumed in the collective life of the English Baptist churches. It had a significant influence at Mold and Buckley, particularly through the interest and work of Gethin Davies. Mold began as a Welsh fellowship which gradually became bilingual and eventually entirely English-speaking by the 1950s. Buckley was English-speaking from its foundation. Through Gethin Davies the college also had a major bearing on the churches in Cefn Mawr and at Chester Street in Wrexham.

When the Buckley church was in its infancy and meeting in the home of Mrs. Anne Price at Daisy Hill, Gethin Davies 'from the Baptist College in Llangollen conducted services and preached very finely.'¹⁴ Some eleven years later he 'happened to be passing through Buckley and found a feeble few gathered together,'¹⁵ the reason being that the Denbigh Flint and Merioneth Association 'had failed to find English-speaking preachers.'¹⁶ Davies intervened and also introduced the church to Richard Cory of Cardiff whose benefaction greatly helped the struggling fellowship build its chapel. He also helped in the purchase 'of a piece of land for the sum £60,'¹⁷ acted as treasurer of the chapel building fund,¹⁸ and became one of the original trustees.¹⁹

When Ebenezer, Mold, was struggling to complete its chapel in Wrexham Street it was Gethin Davies who saved the situation. 'Many small groups of Baptist worshippers ...owed a great deal to this man who was instrumental in reviving interest and support in the half-built building in Wrexham Street in 1879.'²⁰ He also offered to preach once a month, help in the Sunday School, visit members and take a monthly young peoples' meeting on a Saturday night. 'For this he received twenty five shillings a month, but

¹⁴ *Chester Chronicle*, 7 July 1877.

¹⁵ T.W. Pritchard, *The Making of Buckley and District* (Trowbridge; Buckley Society, 2006), p.177.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Centenary Booklet, Ebenezer Baptist Church Buckley 1889-1989*, p.3.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.6.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.4 and Buckley Baptist Church Trust Deeds (held at BUGB Didcot).

²⁰ B. Dean, *Centenary Booklet, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Mold 1880-1980*, p.6.

returned £1 to the building fund.’²¹ Ebenezer, Mold, count him as their first minister from 1880-88.²²

In the early to mid-1870s Gethin Davies had done similar work in Cefn Mawr. During the incorporation of Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, in 1873 he had accepted the invitation to become pastor. In G.V. Price’s assessment ‘he did a great work in assisting the weaker Baptist causes in the district.’²³ Davies was a gifted church planter and exceptionally zealous for Baptist expansion in this area. ‘Not only did he render great personal help in planting new churches but he also did much to strengthen the struggling ones with generous pecuniary assistance.’²⁴ This included both his personal giving, as for example at Ebenezer, Mold, and his friendship with Richard Cory as exemplified at the college, and Buckley as well as Cefn Mawr. He was also involved, with Simon Jones of Wrexham, in the foundation of Mount Pleasant in Ponciau.

Gethin Davies had a hand in the formation of the North Wales Baptist Union (not to be confused with NWEBU) and became its first president in 1889. According to G.V. Price it was formed in October of that year as a result of representatives of ‘ministers and laymen at Chester Street meeting to discuss how the spiritual life of the local churches could be deepened.’²⁵ The eventual union was called ‘The Prayer Union of the Baptist Churches of North Wales and the Border Counties.’²⁶ Writing over thirty years later Price repeats the information, but refers to the resultant union as the ‘North Wales Baptist Union.’²⁷ The key to the differentiation lies firstly in the reference to the border counties because until 1915 Chester Street belonged to the Shropshire Association, and secondly the North Wales Baptist Union met monthly with its prime concern being the spirituality of the churches. The English Baptist Union of North Wales, as Bassett refers to it, was

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, p.1.

²³ G.V. Price. ‘Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and Ditric’, unpublished MS (1964), Chester St. Baptist Church, Wrexham, p.339.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ G.V. Price, *The Old Meeting, Its Times, Ministers and People; The History of the Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham* (Wrexham: E. Jones and Sons [1930]), p.293.

²⁶ Ibid.

formed ten years earlier in 1879,²⁸ which as a more formal union of churches, had an administrative as well as a spiritual brief. The formation of this North Wales prayer union may have been inspired by the prayer union formed in 1887 by F.B. Meyer who was then the minister of Victoria Road Nonconformist Church in Leicester. Meyer's prayer union was widely supported by Baptist ministers and became 'a substantial body in the Baptist Union',²⁹ but local records have not indicated any direct connection with that formed by Gethin Davies.

G.V. Price records that during the time it was located in Llangollen, the college gave considerable help to Chester Street Wrexham 'not only from the students but also from the Principals and Professors,'³⁰ adding the names of Silas Morris and Witton Davies to that of Gethin Davies.

Cefn Mawr, Penycae and Ponciau

Geography played a key part in the beginnings of the English work in these townships. The arrival of migrant English workers in the 1840s and 1850s also created issues of linguistic principle for evangelism and pastoral care. There is evidence of associating within the locality through the pioneering work of local individuals, notably Gethin Davies and Simon Jones, but associating in any broader formalized sense developed once the churches had become established. However in the formation of these three churches the primary common factor was language.

The formation of Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, and also Newry Street in Holyhead, must be viewed in the over-arching context of the perceived threat from English-speaking

²⁷ Price, 'Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p.340.

²⁸ Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.337.

²⁹ I. M. Randall, 'F. B. Meyer and Baptist Life', *Baptist Quarterly* 35 (1993), pp. 19-34. See also Randall, *Spirituality and Change: the Contribution of F.B. Meyer (1847-1929)*, (Paternoster, 2003), pp.62-5.

³⁰ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 248.

industrial migration into solidly Welsh-speaking areas. In his speech at the stone laying ceremony for Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, in 1872, G.O. Morgan MP referred to 'a gap in Offa's Dyke of late years through which the English language is pressing steadily and silently but with perhaps more volume than some of us old stagers would like to confess.'³¹ The most significant aspect of his linguistic comment was that 'we must accept the logic of facts ...we can not shut our eyes to the fact that the English language is making an inroad, I won't say on the hearts of the Cymry, but on the tongues of the Cymry.'³²

W.T.R. Pryce made an important study of the factors affecting the evolution of language in nineteenth century north east Wales.³³ He refers to E.G. Bowen's linguistic categorization of 'inner' and 'outer' Wales,³⁴ and relates the linguistic character of north east Wales in the nineteenth century to being more akin to that of 'outer' rather than 'inner' Wales. Significant influence was brought about through rural depopulation, urban growth, emigration and immigration.³⁵ Pryce refers to what he termed the 'bi-lingual zone,' with communities 'as intensely Welsh in language and culture as any that existed in the rural west,'³⁶ alongside others where 'the sharp changes in the linguistic milieu ...were the direct result of selective in-migration in response to the labour needs of industrialisation.'³⁷ G.V. Price refers to the difficulties of accent between the 'matter of fact speech of the incomers and the poetic peculiarity of the local people.'³⁸

Such perceived threats to the Welsh language however were overshadowed by a further over-arching influence in the government policy to extinguish Welsh and its cultural

³¹ Price 'Servants of God History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p.344.

³² Ibid.

³³ See W.T.R. Pryce, 'Language Areas in North East Wales c. 1800-1911', in G.H. Jenkins (ed.) *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp.20-61.

³⁴ See E.G. Bowen 'The Geography of Wales as a Background to its History' in I. Hume and W.T.R. Price (eds). *The Welsh and Their Country: selected readings in the social sciences* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1986), pp.64-87.

³⁵ Pryce, 'Language Areas in North East Wales c. 1800-1911', p.27.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 45.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, p.115.

expression 'for official purposes in the interests of centralization.'³⁹ Assimilation and centralization were the order of the day. K.O. Morgan cites the infamous case of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in which the entry for Wales read 'see England.'⁴⁰ The clearest expression of linguistic annihilation became apparent in 1847 through the publication of the report of the Education Commissioners, known notoriously as 'The Treachery of the Blue Books'. The catalyst for the inquiry was William Williams, the Welsh-born MP for Coventry. There was a general feeling that 'outbreaks of lawlessness in Wales were mainly due to the ignorance of the working class,'⁴¹ for which a positive solution was deemed to be through the provision of better education rather than repression. This was the attitude expressed by William Williams MP in 1846 quoting a visitor to Wales that:

an ill-educated and undisciplined population, like that amongst the miners in South Wales, is one that may be found most dangerous to the neighbourhood in which it dwells, and that a band of efficient schoolmasters is kept up at much less expense than a body of police or soldiery.⁴²

The negative reaction to the eventual report was not to the provision of education per se but the expression of cultural repression in which it was couched. Trouble was latent within the terms with which William Williams moved for an inquiry into the state of education in Wales 'especially into the means afforded to the labouring classes of acquiring a knowledge of the English language.'⁴³ None of the three English lawyers appointed as commissioners, R.R.W. Lingen, J.C.S. Symons, and H.V. Johnson had any knowledge of Welsh. Seven of their eight Welsh-speaking assistants were Anglicans. Their report included a comment from Symons that 'the Welsh language is a vast drawback in Wales and a manifold barrier to the moral progress and commercial prosperity of the people.'⁴⁴ A more inflammatory comment from Johnson was 'the evil of the Welsh language is obviously and fearfully greatit distorts the truth, favours

³⁹ Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.7.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.8.

⁴¹ R. Coupland, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism* (London: Collins, 1954), p.185.

⁴² Ibid, p.186.

⁴³ Ibid, quoting *Hansard* (1846), v.84 c.4854.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.188 quoting *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales* (1847), vol.2, pt.ii, p.66.

fraud and abets perjury.’⁴⁵ Inevitably the report confirmed the prejudice of the commissioners in its conclusion that the use of Welsh must go. Two factors which reinforced their conclusion only confirmed the fears of the Welsh-speaking population. The first was a desire amongst the working classes for their children to learn English. The second, especially relevant in areas such as Cefn Mawr and Holyhead, was a recognition of the implications for language in the wake of mass immigration. In defence of the commissioners, whilst their report reflected the unwritten assumption within the instigating parliamentary resolution that English was to be the language of education, their undiplomatic prejudicial expression ensured its widespread condemnation from the outset. A bilingual approach never crossed their minds.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was an upsurge of Baptist life through the ministry of Evan Evans (1773-1827) who had been greatly influenced by Christmas Evans. He ministered from 1797 in Rhosllanerchrugug before going to Cefn Mawr in 1802⁴⁶ where he was ‘deeply impressed by the ignorance, illiteracy, and irreligious character of many of the inhabitants,’⁴⁷ and set about establishing a Baptist community. The cause developed, prior to the industrialisation of the area, through open air meetings and house meetings. A comment from Mervyn Himbury, who held a very brief pastorate at Chester Street in 1950, suggested wider church activity was dormant in the late eighteenth century. ‘The Wrexham community had exercised very little influence in the more mountainous parts of the North.’⁴⁸ It is a reasonable assumption he had in mind the hills from Cefn to Glyn Ceiriog rather than Snowdonia, and that the lack of activity was a consequence of the Sandemanianism which had almost closed the Old Meeting. According to G.V. Price, Cefnbychan came under Sandemanian influence through Robert Roberts of Wrexham,⁴⁹ but early in the new century Cefnbychan ‘amalgamated for

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.189.

⁴⁶ R.T. Jenkins, s.n. ‘Evans Evan’ in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (London. Hon. Soc. of Cymmrodorion, 1959,) p.231.

⁴⁷ Price, ‘Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District’ p.65.

⁴⁸ M. Himbury, *British Baptists: A Short History* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1962), p.77.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.16.

ministerial purposes with Salem Penrycae under the ministry of Thomas Davies with assistance from Evan Evans.⁵⁰ Evans himself ‘tended at first towards Sandemanianism but soon decided to plough his own furrow, attaching himself to neither of the two factions which at that time divided North Wales Baptists,⁵¹ the Sandemanian defectors under the influence of J.R. Jones of Ramoth and those who remained in the Northern Association.

Evan Evans was also involved with Baptist developments through house meetings at Northop in Flintshire⁵² which G.V. Price deemed to be a branch of Cefn Mawr until 1810.⁵³ It is unclear how and why Northop became part of the picture and why the Old Meeting is omitted from the sphere of influence. According to T.M. Bassett progress ‘was slower’ in Flintshire and the first church in the county in Holywell was not formed until 1811,⁵⁴ although the *BUW Handbook* dates its foundation in 1804.⁵⁵ In 1802 John Pritchard from the neighbouring village of Northop Hall, was baptized and became a member of the church in Ruthin because there was no Baptist church in Mold.⁵⁶

With the arrival of the Ratcliffes at Wrexham in 1802 the Sandemanian influence had run its course but the Old Meeting was preoccupied with reconstituting itself. A further reason for omitting Chester Street may well have been linguistic. The foundational work in Cefn was in Welsh whereas Chester Street was primarily English-speaking and its eighteenth century links with Cefnbychan and Glyn Ceiriog had been principally through the bilingual ministry of Evan Jenkins and David Jones. Although they belong to the next generation, the non resident trustees of Ebenezer, Mold, confirm the Welsh-speaking links rather than English connections through Wrexham because they were all Welsh Baptist ministers except for Samuel Williams of Brymbo who was a grocer. The ministerial trustees were Joseph Davies of Brymbo, Edward Evans of Holywell, John

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.18.

⁵¹ Jenkins, ‘Evans, Evan’ in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* p.23.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Price, ‘Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District’, p.65.

⁵⁴ Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.104.

⁵⁵ *Baptist Union of Wales Handbook 2007*, p.30.

Williams of Birkenhead, Cernyw Williams of Corwen, Isaac James and Robert Ellis who were both from Ruthin.⁵⁷

The roots of Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, lie in the development of Seion and the pioneering work of Evan Evans which was continued by Ellis Evans (1786-1864), and from 1858 by A.J. Parry (1833-1911). The Welsh-speaking church that eventually became known as Capel Seion was formed on 5 April 1804.⁵⁸ From 1830 to 1860 the population of the parish of Ruabon, which included Cefn Mawr, rose from 8353 to 14343.⁵⁹ Much of this increase is accounted for as an element of contemporary nationwide social migration through the arrival of English people looking for work in the mines and iron works, although there were 'a few English Baptists in the district who were associated with the old Cheshire and Wrexham churches.'⁶⁰ Ellis Evans, who had pastored the church at Cefn Mawr since 1819, was concerned that English incomers should be able to worship in their own language. Abel Parry, who was ordained co-pastor with the elderly Ellis Evans in 1858, commenced English services in the church taking I Peter 1 v. 7 as his text. Price gained his information from the first minute book of Ebenezer,⁶¹ which has since been lost. As a consequence Parry was asked to preach in English once a month, but as the membership strongly disapproved of the venture, regular English services stopped and became occasional events.

At the end of the 1850s congregations at Seion had reached the capacity of the building. Membership was 424 and Sunday School attendance was 450.⁶² Table 28 contains the figures taken during the 1851 religious census. It will be noted from Table 25 there was also a small 'Christian Baptist' cause which is considered later in this section.

A graveyard made the extension of Seion an impossibility so in January 1859 a suitable

⁵⁶ Dean, *Ebenezer Baptist Church Mold*, p.3.

⁵⁷ Ebenezer Baptist church Mold. Copy of trust deeds, p.17.

⁵⁸ Price, 'Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p.66.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 103.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 140.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 404, Note 94.

site for a second chapel was acquired in Well Street which, with the blessing of Seion, was opened as Tabernacl in December 1860. Twenty-four members from Seion became trustees, and a further hundred and fifty became associated with the new fellowship. Abel Parry served both chapels until he left in 1867 for a Welsh language church in Liverpool, and Tabernacl became independent from Seion. It was felt that English services should be provided through Tabernacl and 'an arrangement was put into operation'⁶³ but dissatisfaction made it as difficult to hold English services at Tabernacl as it had at Seion and 'Parry reluctantly discontinued the innovation.'⁶⁴ Whilst it was deemed 'impracticable to continue holding an English service,'⁶⁵ it was also recognized a working arrangement should be found until such time as an English chapel was formed. A temporary solution was made by renting two small cottages behind Tabernacl. Then in 1862 the Calvinistic Methodists built a new chapel and agreed to rent their old building to the English Baptists for £4 per annum. The goodwill of the Welsh Baptists is confirmed by both Seion and Tabernacl releasing six members and Cefnbychan three members to help in the founding of the English cause.⁶⁶ Consequently the English chapel, Ebenezer, was established in July 1862 in the former Calvinistic Methodist building under the supervision of A.J. Parry. It was recognized as a branch of the Welsh cause at Tabernacl.

When A.J. Parry left in 1867 the English Baptists presented him with an illuminated address which paid tribute to his support recording:

sincere acknowledgement of the interest you have manifested towards us at the little English church, having at every opportunity preached ...presided ...and given valuable counsel, shown a ready interest in all our efforts ...undertaken all our pastoral duties without pecuniary return.'⁶⁷

His successor, J.A. Morris, only supervised Ebenezer for a short time as there was a strong desire to establish Ebenezer as an independent cause. A building fund was started,

⁶² Ibid, p.200.

⁶³ Ibid, p.205.

⁶⁴ Ibid .

⁶⁵ Ibid .

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.323.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.326; cf. T. Frimston and W. Hughes (eds) *Hanner Canrif o Lafur Gweinidogaethol y Parch. Abel J. Parry* (Colwyn Bay: Sefydliad Affricanaidd, 1908), p.186; Parry is listed in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*.

land was purchased in 1871 and the new building opened in 1873 with Gethin Davies as pastor.

The laying of the foundation stone was a significant moment locally not only in the establishment of an English-speaking Baptist church, but in regional terms as an indication of the progression of nonconformity within the wider community. From the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 nonconformity was able to build on its legacy and engage more confidently with the wider world, particularly in the second half of the century. This advance was exemplified in the invitation given to George Osbourne Morgan, the MP for Denbighshire and an Anglican, to lay the foundation stone on 18 August 1872. During his speech he declared:

Though I am a member of the Church of England I feel more sympathy with the broad Christianity which is preached from your pulpits than I do with the miserable mixture of maudlin sentimentalism, which is Roman Catholicism in everything but name and without the courage or honesty to call itself to be Roman Catholic, and which apes the poorest features of the Roman Catholic religion from auricular confession to ecclesiastical millinery.⁶⁸

Despite his feisty political Anglicanism, G.O. Morgan was a prominent advocate for disestablishment in England as well as Wales and a significant speaker on Welsh affairs in the House of Commons.

There was steady if unspectacular growth in membership, most notably when E.H. Girdlestone was minister from 1880 to 1885, membership reaching one hundred and eight and the Sunday school one hundred. Table 6 shows that by 1895 the membership was one hundred and twenty-one, with thirteen Sunday school teachers and one hundred and sixty scholars.⁶⁹ During Girdlestone's ministry the decision was taken to reduce the burden of the outstanding debt. Simon Jones of Chester Street, Wrexham, was amongst those who supported the effort. At the time he was president of the Shropshire Association. Commending the appeal in a circular letter he wrote:

I have known the English Baptist Church, Cefn, since its commencement about

⁶⁸ Price, 'Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p.345.

⁶⁹ *Baptist Union Handbook* for 1895.

twenty years ago. I have not witnessed a more energetic Christian flock anywhere. From the dilapidated hovel where they first met with twenty to thirty of a congregation, they have struggled up into a substantial new chapel and schoolroom, situate in the centre of a large population, with an assemblage of upwards of 180 meeting regularly to hear the Gospel. Two able ministers of Christ have been raised by this young church. The case commends itself.⁷⁰

David Bebbington wrote about the 'anti-elitism'⁷¹ of Victorian nonconformity. In Wales as in England 'the self-image of the nonconformist was the common man,'⁷² and in this context 'Welsh nationality despite the language barrier was very close in spirit to English Nonconformity.'⁷³ Bebbington refers to the plebeian culture expressed by E.P. Thompson which was marked by 'neighbourliness, respect for fair dealing and rough yet vibrant ways'.⁷⁴ Bebbington discusses the plebeian cultural milieu in which nonconformity found itself where a significant proportion kept minimal contact with the parish church, and probably as many attended no place of worship at all. The values of many outside the chapels were 'an amalgam of Christian teaching and eclectic supernaturalism'⁷⁵ in both rural and urban areas. There were those for whom the chapel presented a practical barrier because it symbolized respectability, self-improvement and getting on in the world. To them chapel was viewed as 'treachery to one's mates,'⁷⁶ and conversely for the chapel-goer the rough pleasures of life were viewed with distaste. The mutual antithesis was between worldliness and discipleship.

Bebbington's points reflecting the social impact of nonconformist culture nationally are clearly illustrated by several resolutions passed by the church meeting at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, during 1888 which delineate the reaction of the church to the dangers to which young people especially were liable. Those who were known to frequent public houses

⁷⁰ Price, 'Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p.354.

⁷¹ D. Bebbington, 'Gospel and Culture in Victorian Nonconformity' in J. Shaw & A. Kreider(eds.) *Culture and the Nonconformist tradition*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press,1999),p.52.

⁷² Ibid, p.50.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid, quoting E.P. Thompson, 'The Patricians and the Plebs', in *Customs in Common*(London: Penguin Books, 1991), page no. not given.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.53.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.54.

would come under church discipline. All members engaged in the liquor trade were expected to give it up as soon as practicable. Dancing classes, theatrical performances and football contests were deemed contrary to the development of spiritual life so members participating in them would come under church discipline.⁷⁷ Such resolutions also exemplify Bebbington's reminder of the negative aspect of the 'Nonconformist Conscience'. 'Its targets were what nonconformists identified as intrinsic wrongs ...the conscience did not offer constructive proposals but instead called for the abandonment of existing practices.'⁷⁸ Demands were for immediate action 'as there could be no loitering with sin.'⁷⁹

In defining Welsh nationalism David Adamson argues that the nineteenth century working class within Wales was 'not a homogenous Nonconformist congregation,'⁸⁰ a point with which T.M. Bassett concurs, stating it was difficult to see how Baptists in mid century, even had they been united,⁸¹ could have done much to influence elections. Nationalism however was broader than political activity. It also had roots in anglicisation and secularization. What Nonconformity did was to act as 'an ideological cement in establishing a Welsh bourgeoisieit had synthesized bourgeois interests with those of the rural tenantry and the urban proletariat.'⁸² This Welsh bourgeoisie formed the moral and intellectual leaders of social formation. In Adamson's view the growing emphasis on culture and language was less of a natural cultural flowering and more of a response to growing secularization, anglicisation and organization of the working class in Wales. The Welsh nonconformist bourgeoisie emphasized its ideological components of culture, religion, and Liberalism as a response to 'these pressures on its hegemony.'⁸³ Whilst Adamson relates the economic origins of this socio-political metamorphosis to the 'development of the capitalist relations of production in South Wales',⁸⁴ it must be

⁷⁷ Price 'Servants of God History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p. 357.

⁷⁸ Bebbington, 'Gospel and Culture in Victorian Nonconformity', p. 48.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ D.L. Adamson, *Class, Ideology, and the Nation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p.115.

⁸¹ Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.298 .

⁸² Adamson, *Class, Ideology, and the Nation*, p.119.

⁸³ Ibid, p.187.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.119.

recognized there were similar movements in North Wales albeit on a smaller scale.

The mid-twentieth-century historian Gordon Rupp made the same point. 'The nonconformists were much more than an aggregate of Mutual Improvement Societies, for they were sustained by deep spiritual impulses which persisted from the Evangelical revival.'⁸⁵ Rupp quoted R.E. Kellett's comment 'it is almost impossible to exaggerate the part played by the church or chapel in the lives of its adherents. It took by itself the place now hardly filled by theatre, concert hall, cinema, ballroom, and circulating library together. It may have been a very small and narrow world, but it was one that pulsed with life.'⁸⁶ This was evidenced by the choral culture of nonconformity in North East Wales. In the late 1870s a singing class was held on Saturday evenings in Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, 'at which the tonic solfa notation of music was taught'⁸⁷ by Robert Price. Hobson Thomas, minister at Chester Street from 1892-98, who was fond of singing, formed the Wrexham and District English Baptist Choral Union. Besides Chester Street it included people from Aberderfyn, Brymbo, Cefn Mawr, Penycae, Holt, and Llangollen. Some of his objectives surfaced at the sixth of annual gathering held in Oswestry on 2 May 1898. Addressing the evening meeting he thought the churches were in a position to congratulate themselves, but his purpose lay deeper than merely the enjoyment of the music and the concerts. 'The Established Church and the Roman Catholic Church had made it a point to perfect, in the artistic sense, the service of song in their places of worship.'⁸⁸ He believed nonconformists were lagging behind their standards and 'thought the object of such festivals was to enable free churches to sing not only with heart but also with understanding.'⁸⁹ Such activities also illustrate Bebbington's point that besides making an impact on the whole of society, nonconformists 'were also creating their own micro-culture: the world of the chapel.'⁹⁰

⁸⁵ G. Rupp, 'Evangelicalism of the Nonconformists', in *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians*, p. 106.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Price, 'Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p.350.

⁸⁸ Price, 'Rev. Hobson Thomas: an appreciation', (Unpublished MS. Chester Street Baptist Church, Undated (c.1966?), p.29.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Bebbington, 'Gospel and Culture in Victorian Nonconformity', p. 49.

During 1889 there was an occurrence which, in the light of the current emphasis on outreach and mission, has to be viewed as a missed opportunity. G.V. Price presents the facts but offers no explanation. Richard Cory had offered interest free loans for three chapels to be built at Rhosymedre, Trefynant, and Cefnbychan. Gethin Davies was asked if he could persuade Richard Cory to advance enough money to build a chapel seating two hundred at Trefynant. One of the Ebenezer members, S.S. Hall, offered a site which was accepted, but at some point later it was rejected in favour of a site that was available from a Robert Edwards for £60. Twelve Ebenezer members were appointed to process the venture, 'but apparently no action was taken.'⁹¹ Ebenezer was extended in 1899. The pastor, W.O. Williams, considered the church to be in a low spiritual state in 1901 and despite holding a week of special prayer meetings to revive the work a major disagreement in 1903 led to a breakaway and the foundation of Bethel English Baptist Church. However the development of 'chapel spite'⁹² belongs to the twentieth century.⁹³

The English Baptist church at Zion, Penycae, predates the beginnings of Mount Pleasant, Ponciau, by about six years. English services were started at Salem Welsh Baptist church during 1873. The following year the English church was formed and an 'iron chapel'⁹⁴ erected. The first preachers were supplied by students from Llangollen Baptist College. From 1889 to 1900 Zion, Penycae, was linked with Mount Pleasant, Ponciau. In 1897 both churches shared the ministry of D.H. Jenkins of Ponciau who had settled there in 1895.⁹⁵ It has not been possible to gain access to any surviving records. Details about the church have been gleaned from conversations with William Evans who was baptized at Zion in the mid 1950s and was for many years the Church Secretary.

According to Evans, Salem did not initiate the work at Zion although the two churches shared the minister for many years. William Evans' account of the origins of the cause

⁹¹ Price, 'Servants of God: History of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District', p.358.

⁹² A frequent description of Bethel in conversations with Eleanor Bowen, a former member of Ebenezer.

⁹³ This is fully considered in chapter 5. See pp. 227-230

⁹⁴ W.T. Whitley, *Baptists of North West England 1649-1913* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1913), p.335.

⁹⁵ *Baptist Union Handbook for 1897.*

differs from that given by W.T. Whitley in 1913. According to his recollections there are two versions of how the church started. The first is that it grew from a cottage meeting in Stryt Isa where the fellowship was known as the 'Baptist Brethren'. The leader of the fellowship was a manager in the Pant brickworks. The other view is that the cause began more or less in its present location. According to anecdotal evidence there used to be a farm house near the present site known as 'The Hall'. One of the daughters from the farm was converted and obtained permission for the fellowship to meet in one of the barns. William Evans was not sure of the year, but confirmed there was a tin tabernacle on the present site and that the land had been sold by the family at the Hall.⁹⁶ The deeds required the minister to be evangelical but made no stipulation about baptism and membership so an 'open table' policy could be practised. In the 1950s, Evans and his contemporary, John Davies, challenged the practice of closed communion, having been told it was in compliance with the deeds. However when they were eventually examined, no such statement was found and open communion was reinstated.

John Davies compiled a document entitled *An Abbreviated History of Zion (Groes) Baptist Church*. It corroborates William Evans' information and adds a little further detail. Much of it came from recollections by Mrs. B.M. Jones who had been a member for eighty two years. Davies refers to a clause in the deeds which, besides confirming the church is for the worship of Protestant dissenters, maintains that the pastor must hold to the sole authority of scripture 'and that interpretation of them usually called evangelical in contradistinction to Unitarianism and Romanism.'⁹⁷ Davies refers to the cottage meetings in Stryt Isa, adding there were 'problems arising from language preferences,'⁹⁸ so the Welsh speakers separated in order to worship in Rhosllanerchrugog. Davies' paper names James Stokes, a grocer, as the first leader who was assisted by James Lloyd Thomas. Davies' version of the early years differs from that of William Evans, referring not to one of the daughters from the farm having been converted, but to James Thomas

⁹⁶ Conversation with William Evans 10 October 2007.

⁹⁷ J. Davies, 'An abbreviated history of Zion (Groes) Baptist Church', Unpublished MS (2007), No page no.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

and his wife with their three sons and three daughters moving into Groes Farm in the early 1870s. When the cottage became too small it was James Thomas who offered the use of a barn. One of his daughters 'moved by the plight of poor children in the village'⁹⁹ began a Sunday school on 5 June 1873, using the 'old schoolroom' at Salem. As a result of increasing numbers at both the barn and the Sunday school, the land was purchased for the original tin tabernacle to be built.

In the later 1890s a brick chapel was built as the 'iron chapel' was too hot in summer and too cold in winter, the driving factor being the inadequacy of the building rather than any surge in numbers. Tables 5 and 6 indicate membership fell from twenty seven in 1889 to twenty two in 1895. The estimate for the walls and roof was £650.¹⁰⁰ Much of the money was raised by loans from members and supporters but, as with many chapels across the denominational divide, it took many years to pay off the debt. Davies refers to a 'pay up or be shown up kind of discipline.'¹⁰¹ The secretary was instructed to write to all members who had not contributed more than one penny per week giving them an opportunity 'to give an offering before the balance sheets were produced.'¹⁰² The brick chapel was opened in 1899.

Mount Pleasant, Ponciau, grew out of Sunday school work. At the jubilee celebrations in 1926 John Evans, the senior deacon and a founding member outlined the history of the cause basing his remarks on his diaries dating back to 1880. He had previously been a Calvinistic Methodist but was baptized in the river Dee having become convinced that believers' baptism was scriptural. He started an English Baptist mission in Acrefair on 7 August 1881, but the following year came to live in Johnstown. In 1883 the first open air service of English Baptists was held on Ponkey Banks at which two hundred people were present. Then in 1884 the first service was held at Aberderfyn chapel when seventeen people attended the morning service and fifty six came in the afternoon. The collection

⁹⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid.
¹⁰¹ Ibid.
¹⁰² Ibid.

came to 3/1d. He recorded that on 28 August there were one hundred and eighty children and as there were only six teachers they had some difficulty keeping order.¹⁰³ A follow-up remark suggests that on 3 March 1887 Gethin Davies 'appointed five representatives to control Aberderfyn: Ishmael Jones, Thomas Evans, Samuel Jones, J.O. Hughes, and Richard Davies.'¹⁰⁴ A slightly different account states the cause was 'started by the late Edward Bryanassisted by the late John Evans'.¹⁰⁵ In 1886 they 'gathered a number of the poor children of the neighbourhood to form a Sunday school.'¹⁰⁶ Initially they used Capel Penuel but when the Sunday School became successful they needed larger premises. The Scotch Baptists allowed them to use Capel Soar, Aberderfyn, and for some time the English cause in Ponciau was referred to as Soar, Aberferfyn. In 1900 the *Welsh Baptist Diary* was recording one hundred and fifty scholars and fourteen teachers.¹⁰⁷ Reference was made to the interest shown by Gethin Davies from the college in Llangollen, and Simon Jones from Chester Street Wrexham.

G.V. Price corroborates the Gethin Davies and Simon Jones connection in a story told by the mother of Rev. Stephen Jones of Aberderfyn. Both men had arrived to meet a delegation 'with a view to starting an English Baptist Church at Soar Chapel'¹⁰⁸ as the Scotch Baptists had moved to their new chapel at Tabernacle, Chapel Street, Ponciau. Apparently the delegation did not arrive so 'Mr. Jones and Dr. Gethin Davies proceeded with the business that night at Bryn Offa and there founded the English Baptist church which is now Mount Pleasant.'¹⁰⁹ Simon Jones became one of the original trustees but not Gethin Davies.¹¹⁰ Mount Pleasant was incorporated as a church in 1888. 'The superintendent of the time being Mr. Thomas Phillips, now the Principal of Cardiff

¹⁰³ Anon. Hand written document in the possession of Norman Land, based on the Jubilee celebrations of 1926 'How the Cause Started', p.2.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Document in the possession of Mrs. Audrey Jones, Rhosllanerchrugog, widow of Norman Jones who for many years was the church secretary.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Price, 'Alderman Simon Jones J.P.', unpublished MS (c.1962), Chester Street Baptist Church, p.37.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ An undated single sheet document in the possession of Mrs. Audrey Jones, Rhosllanerchrugog.

Baptist College'.¹¹¹ It is possible the title 'superintendent' was given out of deference to Thomas Phillips who was present at the celebrations in 1935. In another document he is referred to as being the first minister of the cause whilst he was a student at Llangollen College.¹¹² The title 'student pastor' did not come into vogue until the second half of the twentieth century. Before going to Cardiff as principal, Tom Phillips had been minister at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church and was known as 'Tom. Phillips, Bloomsbury'.¹¹³ The final service in Soar, Aberderfyn was held on 24 June 1892 and the new chapel, Mount Pleasant, opened on 1 July. The minister was Rev. Henry Rees. He resigned in 1894 and moved to Llangollen. From 30 June 1895 to 5 December 1897 Rev. D.H. Jenkins was pastor. Whilst the Mount Pleasant archives make no mention of any link with Zion, Penycae, the *Baptist Handbook* for 1897 does record he was minister at both churches.

Amongst the listed patrons at a bazaar and sale of work held on 3 and 4 October 1892 were Alderman and Mrs. Cory from Cardiff, Simon Jones from Wrexham, and Dr. Gethin Davies from Bangor, the college having moved there in 1892. Also present were Thomas Congreve from Brighton, and Rev. W.D. Jones from the English Baptist church in Holyhead. The brochure for the bazaar included a brief account of the cause that was founded by 'the late Mr. Bryan.'¹¹⁴ It made no reference to John Evans, a key founding member, but did pay tribute to Simon Jones of Wrexham. When Mr. Bryan left many thought 'it was all up with the little cause at Aberderfyn,'¹¹⁵ but Simon Jones 'stepped forward and with his usual tact and wisdom, combined with self-sacrificing efforts and fervency of spirit, watched over and nursed the orphan child in the midst of its unconscious bereavement.'¹¹⁶ The brochure also stated the present pastor, Henry Rees, took charge of the work under the 'valuable patronage of the "Cory Home Mission

¹¹¹ A copy of the Silver Jubilee brochure 1885-1935, in the possession of Norman Land, a current deacon, p.2.

¹¹² Document in the possession of Mrs. Audrey Jones, Rhosllanerchrugog.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Brochure for the bazaar and sale of work October 3 and 4 1892 in the possession of Mrs. Audrey Jones of Rhosllanerchrugog.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Scheme.”¹¹⁷ The new chapel was built for £850. The membership and friends contributed £250 leaving a debt of £600, and it was hoped the bazaar would raise £200 towards the reduction of the debt.

The statistics for the Cefn Mawr and Ponciau area in the 1851 religious census (Table 28) all relate to Welsh-speaking causes prior to the formation of the English fellowships. The Welsh-speaking mother church which became known as Capel Seion is referred to as ‘the big church’ (Capel Mawr). The space available is recorded as ‘free 42. other 354, standing 205. At the three services three hundred attended in the morning, six hundred in the afternoon, and six hundred in the evening. Unlike the returns from many other churches no separate figure is given for Sunday School scholars. The average congregation over the year is recorded as seven hundred with three hundred and ninety-eight scholars.¹¹⁸

Besides revealing basic statistics, the calendar of returns for the religious census of 1851 raises some interesting questions. In addition to Capel Seion, figures are also given for another Baptist cause in Cefn Mawr entitled ‘Christian Baptist.’¹¹⁹ The building was erected in 1837. All the space is said to be free, but no capacities are given. There were ten at the morning service, twenty-eight at the afternoon service and thirty in the evening. The name of Edward Jones is given as the secretary who is also described as a labourer. With the title ‘Christian Baptist’ the question arises whether this was a Scotch Baptist cause like Bethel Rhosllanerchrugog a longstanding Scotch Baptist church also described as Christian Baptist.¹²⁰ Conchy chapel,¹²¹ on the other hand is clearly described as Scotch Baptist. The location of the latter is unclear with a possibility it is an onomatopoeic version of Ponkey which later reverted to its Welsh version of Ponciau. If the two Christian Baptist causes were not Scotch Baptist it is possible they may have been Campbellite. There might be a clue in the title of Alexander Campbell’s magazine which

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ I.G. Jones (ed), *The Religious Census 1851, A Calendar of returns relating to Wales*, Vol.2 North Wales (Cardiff: University of Wales Press,1981), p.152.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p.154.

¹²¹ Ibid.

was called *The Christian Baptist*. A letter appeared in *The Christian Baptist* of January 1825 referring to the church in Dungannon which was the first Campbellite church in Britain and from which the cause spread to the mainland.¹²² Whilst a magazine and churches with the same title are not concrete evidence, they may be indicators.

The similarity between Scotch Baptist and Campbellite churches may have been close enough to confuse the compilers of the statistical returns for the 1851 census. The remarks attached to the returns for Bethel, Rhosllanerchrugog describe how 'we continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers etc.'¹²³ Such a statement could pass both as Scotch Baptist and Campbellite, but Bethel has always been referred to locally as Scotch Baptist. The recorded attendance for Bethel was fifty at the morning service, seventy-eight in the afternoon and eighty-two in the evening.¹²⁴ The figures for Conchy Chapel were seven in the morning and twenty-four in the afternoon.¹²⁵ The space is described in terms of the size of the room at 24 feet by 18 rather than the numbers that could be accommodated.

Developments in Wrexham

The primary focus in the Wrexham area is the Old Meeting which as the century progressed became more frequently known as Chester Street Baptist Church. English Baptist churches were also founded in some of the surrounding villages such as Holt, Brymbo and Bryn Teg. There was very little coordination between the outlying churches. Holt was founded through the efforts of George Sayce when he was at Chester Street in the 1820s. It was always closely linked to the Wrexham church and at times its membership was included within the Chester Street figures as shown in tables 7 – 16. In contrast, the churches in the valleys to the West of Wrexham had little connection with Chester Street during the nineteenth century. Returns for the 1890s illustrate the linguistic balance of the district. In 1891 the Welsh cause at Tabernacl, Brymbo, where

¹²² A.C. Watters, *History of the British Churches of Christ* (Indianapolis: School of Religion, Butler University, 1948) p.26.

¹²³ Jones (ed.) *Religious Census 1851, A Calendar of returns relating to Wales*, Vol.2, p.154.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Dr. E.K. Jones was minister, had 182 members, 32 Sunday school teachers and 435 children¹²⁶ whereas in 1895 the English cause at Lodge which had developed from Tabernacl had 20 members and 65 children.¹²⁷(Table 6) The number of Sunday school teachers is not recorded. Occasionally the idea of a joint pastorate was considered, such one suggested by Simon Jones in 1867 to link ‘the small Baptists churches at Holt, Brymbo, Plasynfron, and Cefn Mawr in a home missionary organization with a view to increasing their efficiency by maintaining an evangelist.’¹²⁸ There was also the invitation given to Joseph Beaupre in 1900 to a joint pastorate involving Bradley Road, Holt and Lodge. Simon Jones’ idea was not adopted, and the Joseph Beaupre pastorate scarcely lasted a year before he left for Wincanton.

When the nineteenth century dawned the Old Meeting, which had been pastored by the Sandemanian Robert Roberts, was almost extinct. The church was revived with the arrival of John and Mary Ratcliffe from Manchester who, together with remaining members, sought the help of Rev. John Palmer of Shrewsbury who consequently made several visits to Wrexham. He eventually arranged for Richard Price of Newtown to come as a probationary minister for twelve months. The church was reconstituted, and quickly gained five new members through baptism. They were William Fossey Jenkins, who was the son of the former pastor Joseph Jenkins, his wife Hannah, Isaac Matthews who became the custodian of the dissenters’ buryng ground, Elizabeth Griffiths and Sarah Roberts. John and Mary Ratcliffe had also become members. John Ratcliffe was appointed a deacon on 20 November 1805, the same day that Richard Price was ordained. It was through the continuing links with John Palmer that Chester Street affiliated to the Shropshire Association.

Richard Price did not stay long. ‘After witnessing the reorganization of the church and the success of his labours’¹²⁹ he moved to Wellington. Thomas Barraclough was called

125

Ibid.

126

Baptist Union Handbook for 1891.

127

Baptist Union Handbook for 1895.

128

Chester Street Baptist Church, Church Book, p.80.

129

Ibid, p.229.

from the Bradford Academy and was ordained on 31 March 1810 but died on 20 June 1811 having caught a cold whilst taking a funeral. The strain of his evangelistic ministry and 'the fatigues of a school that he was under the necessity of teaching, were too great for his constitution.'¹³⁰ His death exposed the financial vulnerability of ministerial families. His wife was left to bring up five children. The youngest, only three weeks old when his father died, also died a few months later. The church required the help of John Palmer once more. Decline was reversed with the appointment of George Sayce who, in order to eke out his salary, continued in his trade as a tallow chandler for some time.

Under Sayce's ministry the congregation grew. Baptisms were a regular occurrence sometimes with five or more candidates. On one occasion there were thirteen. The membership in 1838 was 97,¹³¹ by 1843 it was 117 with 140 in the Sunday school.¹³² The chapel had to be altered in order to accommodate the increasing congregation and the Sunday school rose to around two hundred and twenty scholars. Sayce was a conscientious pastor and district evangelist. He had to drop Gresford from his itinerary for a while having offended the curate, but the cause of his displeasure is not known. The Baptist church at Holt was founded through his itinerant ministry but it never became a strong cause. In the religious census of 1851 (table 28) seventeen attended morning Sunday school. In the afternoon another seventeen were present with fifteen scholars and thirty at the evening meeting. There was however free space for two hundred. The returns were authorized by Thomas Chaloner who called himself the Acting Elder.¹³³ Sayce also established short-lived preaching stations at Rhosrobin and Bowling Bank.

In the early 1820s, Chester Street, Wrexham, had to appoint new trustees because all except Joseph Jones had died. It is not the names of the appointees that are of interest but their occupations as tradesmen and shopkeepers which presents a good picture of the social fabric of the church, and where Wrexham Baptists found themselves on the social

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.230.

¹³¹ *Annual Report of the Baptist Union for 1838*, p.56.

¹³² *Annual Report of the Baptist Union for 1843*, p.67.

¹³³ Jones (ed.), *The Religious Census 1851 A Calendar of returns relating to Wales*, Vol.2. p. 147.

scale of the town and district. Three trustees came from outside the Wrexham area but they too were of more or less equal social standing. John Whalley, whose family links with the church went back to the ministry of Joseph Jenkins, was a farmer from Carwarden in Cheshire, Benjamin Jones Griffiths of Oswestry was a draper, and had been a deacon with his brother Joseph Jones Griffiths who was a grocer. Thomas Sudlow was a hatter from Liverpool. Of the Wrexham trustees Richard Sudlow, his brother, was an assistant to a third brother J.B. Sudlow who was a grocer. George Sayce, although not ordained until 27 June 1821, was appointed a trustee but under his original occupation of tallow chandler. Evan Morris was a skinner. John Price was a glazier. William Fossey Jenkins, the son of the former minister Joseph Jenkins, was a draper.¹³⁴

Forty-six years later, after age had again taken its toll, the trustees appointed in 1867 reflected the same social fabric. Broughton Broster was a postman. His brother, Thomas Broster, was a post office clerk. There were two drapers, John Sudlow and Thomas Jones. Edward Lloyd was a plumber, and Benjamin Owen a builder. There were two confectioners, Simon Jones, and Caleb Preston. Ellis Williams was a shoemaker, Henry Breyne was a gardener, and Thomas Griffiths a railway clerk. The remaining two trustees Richard Barrett, a tutor, and Jonathon Owen, an accountant, would be perhaps deemed as 'professional' rather than 'trade'.¹³⁵

The social standing of the trustees, and by implication the members, illustrates a point made by David Bebbington that in terms of social position nonconformists were not amongst the great in the land. 'Evangelical nonconformity ...was moulded by its experience of being outside the centres of power.'¹³⁶ He claims that by and large nonconformity comprised many of the poor. The Methodists were largely working class. The distinction that Primitive Methodists were working class and Wesleyans middle class 'turns out not to have been the case at all.'¹³⁷ According to Bebbington, Baptists were

¹³⁴ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.240.

¹³⁵ Ibid p.265.

¹³⁶ Bebbington, 'Gospel and Culture in Victorian Nonconformity', p.49.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

similar, although Congregationalists were slightly higher in the social order.¹³⁸

Price records that in 1844 twelve members left Chester Street, 'peacefully and amicably drawn together by similar views and a kindred spirit to form the Church of Christ.'¹³⁹ He details the nomadic existence of the new grouping which met first in Bank Street, then in Brook Street, before returning to Bank Street prior to purchasing the old Roman Catholic chapel in King Street which they refurbished and opened on 9 May 1858. The final home of the Wrexham Church of Christ was in Talbot Road. Price lists the principal speakers, Rev. David King of London, Mr. Wallis the editor of the *British Millennial Harbinger*, J.H. Milner the editor of the *Christian Advocate*, Jabez Inwards of London and others.¹⁴⁰ The *Millennial Harbinger* replaced the *Christian Baptist*. It was becoming clear that separation from other Baptist groups was imminent, and 'the first volume was devoted largely to questions of the organization of the church.'¹⁴¹

Price adds several of the members later returned to Chester Street or to its daughter church at Bradley Road. What he does not say is how much later they may have returned. Those who left in 1844 could not have returned to Bradley Road for at least 56 years because it was not built until 1899. Neither does he mention that the amicable seceders had come under Campbellite influence. A.H. Dodd dates the Campbellite secession from Chester Street as 1837¹⁴², despite the church book account being dated 1844.

The Campbellite cause is listed in the religious census of 1851 as Bank Street Baptist which is described as 'not a separate building but used exclusively as a place of worship.'¹⁴³ The census returns, showing considerable growth since 1844, are given in

¹³⁸ Ibid, quoting H. McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), p.33.

¹³⁹ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.239.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ E. Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and the Disciples of Christ* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1949), p.76.

¹⁴² A.H. Dodd, *History of Wrexham* (Wrexham: Hughes and Son, 1957), p.202.

¹⁴³ Jones (ed.), *The Religious Census 1851, A Calendar of returns relating to Wales*, Vol.2, p.157.

Table 28. The recorder was William Bayley¹⁴⁴ who is described as a deacon. There were Bayleys in Chester Street around the middle of the nineteenth century and as the name is not common in the area it is a reasonable assumption William Bayley was related to them.

Of the Campbellite names mentioned by G.V. Price, David King (1825-94) was the most prominent amongst the second generation leaders of the Churches of Christ in Britain. Thomas Milner had been baptized by the Scotch Baptists in his native Scotland in 1842. In 1855 he formed his own congregation in Nicholson Street, Edinburgh, which subsequently joined the Churches of Christ. Milner became an evangelist and published the *Christian Advocate*. The credit for introducing Campbellite teaching in Britain goes to William Jones (1762-1846). Jones was born in Gresford some three miles north of Wrexham, but in his teens he lived with his brother in law in Chester 'who was of the anti-paedobaptist persuasion.'¹⁴⁵ He became acquainted with Archibald McLean through the Chester Baptists and was baptized by him in October 1786 in the river Dee at Boughton.¹⁴⁶ The book-selling business which Jones ran with his two brothers in law, Thomas and Joseph Crane, moved from Chester to Liverpool where McLean introduced him to J.R. Jones of Ramoth. He is mentioned in correspondence between McLean and J.R. Jones.¹⁴⁷ William Jones became an elder in the Liverpool church and eventually moved to London where he pastored a Scotch Baptist Church in Windmill Street. In 1833 an American Campbellite called Wyeth attended the London church and from conversation with him Jones concluded the American Campbellites were very close to the Scotch Baptists. He wrote:

I requested to be favoured with the names of some of the leading persons, particularly such as were elders of churches, and was not a little surprised to hear the first name mentioned was that of Mr. Alexander Campbell, the antagonist of Robert Owen, Esq., whose public disputation on the evidences of Christianity I had read at the time with peculiar interest, without having the slightest suspicion that his views of divine truth and gospel-worship were so congenial with my own. The information now given me concerning Mr. Campbell, his more abundant

¹⁴⁴

Ibid.

¹⁴⁵

W. Jones, *Autobiography* (London: Snow, 1846), p.8.

¹⁴⁶

Ibid p.26.

¹⁴⁷

Watters, *History of the British Churches of Christ*, p.27, quoting *Christian Advocate*, 1881, p.433.

labours in spreading abroad a savour of the knowledge of Christ, both from the pulpit and the press, his intrepidity and zeal, the talents conferred upon him by the exalted Head of the Church, and his powerful advocacy of the cause of primitive Christianity, all gladdened my heart, and made me ardently long to be introduced to his acquaintance before we quitted the stage of life.¹⁴⁸

Eventually Jones decided he would not publish any more of Campbell's writings as differences emerged between the Campbellites and the Scotch Baptists particularly relating to baptismal regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit, requirements for the celebration of the Lord's Supper and 'many divers and strange doctrines.'¹⁴⁹ Jones remained with the Scotch Baptists but his writings created disruption amongst the Scotch Baptists of North Wales. Whilst under the influence of the Churches of Christ he had reported there were twelve churches with four hundred and eighty eight members amongst whom 'concord and brotherly love presided'. Some few years later however a Churches of Christ reporter painted a very different picture. 'It is a curious fact that the writings of the Reformers in America were wholly acceptable to all the Scotch Baptists in Wales so long as Jones of London held his communication with these American brethren, but as soon as he turned to be an enemy to this reformation in the least degree, a great part of them followed him. We soon found that a tempest was coming against us.'¹⁵⁰ The consequence was a parting of the ways with the Scotch Baptists that set the Churches of Christ on their own with acrimony rather than 'concord and brotherly love.' In Ramoth ten people were expelled 'for their exertion to learn the way of God more perfectly. These formed themselves into a church and are now double their number, their minister is Robert Rees.'¹⁵¹ At Harlech 'six persons were expelled ...and have now increased to fourteen: William Pugh, minister'.¹⁵² Eighteen left the Baptists in Llanidloes, and a similar number at Machynlleth. In Criccieth it was the other way round because 'the majority held the Reformers' views of divine truth: so they retained the chapel.'¹⁵³ No

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, quoting Jones *Millenial Harbinger* Vol 1, p.17.

¹⁴⁹ Jones, *Autobiography*, p.125.

¹⁵⁰ Watters, *History of the British Churches of Christ*, p.27, quoting *Christian Advocate*, 1881, p.28 quoting *Christian Messenger*, 1837, p. 252.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

dates are indicated in the article.

The question arises as to how and by whom the seceders from Chester Street were influenced. The Scotch Baptists clearly predate the Cambellites, so the two possibilities are either from Scotch Baptists turned Campbellites from Cefn Mawr and the south of Wrexham, or from an area north of Wrexham.

The religious census of 1851 lists a Baptist chapel in Allington which is an anglicized version of an area just to the south west of Rossett more commonly called Trevalyn. Little is known about this cause which became linked to the Churches of Christ and also had tenuous connections with Chester Street, Wrexham. Charles Davies, the leading figure in the cause, belonged to a longstanding local family which had occupied the family home in Cox Lane for two hundred years. The Davies family worshipped at a local congregational church, but the preachers were frequently invited to their home to conduct afternoon meetings for the family and invited friends. When there was no preacher the home fellowship engaged in Bible study. On one occasion a Jane Whalley was present. Whether she was directly connected to Chester Street or was a relative of the Chester Street Whalleys is unclear. However in 1809 the verse from Mark 16:16, 'whoever believes and is baptised will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned', occupied their attention for three weeks and as a consequence they decided they should be baptised. Charles Davies requested baptism at Chester Street, Wrexham and 'after six months' probation the ordinance was administered. He then baptised his wife, his son, and some thirty others.'¹⁵⁴ His son John Davies, who was then sixteen, began to participate in the meetings and came well to the front in preaching the Word.¹⁵⁵

The fellowship sought to follow the teaching and practice of the New Testament, 'but did not know of another congregation anywhere deliberately seeking a return to the simple

¹⁵⁴ T. Hagger, *Heralds of Christian Unity: Being Brief Biographical Sketches of Some Pioneers of the Restoration Movement* (Melbourne: Austral Printing and Publishing Company, 1938), p.39.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Christianity of the beginning,¹⁵⁶ which suggests either they only had a loose connection with Chester Street, or considered it was not following what they considered to be the simple practices of the New Testament. It seems that Cox Lane existed in isolation until 1835 when ‘a brother named Bennion’¹⁵⁷ reported how he had heard from a Scotch Baptist friend in Chester about ‘a religious movement in America.’¹⁵⁸ He borrowed three copies of the *Millennial Harbinger* published by William Jones and the Cox Lane cause became Campbellite. In 1837 they obtained copies of *The Christian Messenger* edited by James Wallis of Nottingham and discovered there were other fellowships like their own.¹⁵⁹ Archibald Watters corroborates the account adding that they were surprised to learn through the *Christian Messenger* there was a ‘New Testament Church’ in Wrexham that had been going for about seven years which ‘had never been connected with the Scotch Baptists or any other Baptists’.¹⁶⁰ It remains to be discovered exactly who that group was and where they met, or even if it was a reference to themselves. If the article in the *Christian Messenger* referred to the ‘Christian Baptist’ cause in Cefn Mawr whose building was erected in 1837,¹⁶¹ did they influence the Chester Street seceders, or did A.H. Dodd’s suggestion the Wrexham Campbellites were formed in 1837 refer to Cox Lane? G.V. Price implies the secessionists were founding members, ‘drawn together by similar views and a kindred spirit to form the Churches of Christ,’¹⁶² but does not indicate their source of influence. Neither possibility can be proven beyond reasonable doubt but the article in the *Christian Messenger* referring to the spontaneous group tips the balance of possibilities towards the north.

The Campbellite doctrine of baptism included baptismal regeneration. The Church of Christ historian A.C. Watters has written that:

their *doctrine* of Baptism, and their teaching about its connection with conversion

156

Ibid

157

Ibid

158

Ibid

159

Ibid, p.40

160

Watters, *History of the British Churches of Christ*, p.27, quoting *Christian Advocate*, 1881, p.30 quoting *Christian Messenger*, 1837, p.357.

161

Jones (ed.), *The Religious Census of 1851: A Calender of the returns relating to Wales*, Vol.2, North Wales p.152

162

Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.239.

and regeneration, separate them from all other immersionists. Indeed it is much more like the doctrine of Baptism which has been accepted in the Catholic Church from the earliest ages; for if members of Churches of Christ accept anything they certainly accept the affirmation of the Nicene Creed, 'We believe in one Baptism *for the remission of sins.*' And, as the Anglican catechism professes, they firmly believe that *faith* and *repentance* are necessary pre-requisites to Baptism; but, unlike all the Catholic Churches - Anglican, Roman and Eastern - they do not allow that faith and repentance can be exercised by proxy. They therefore reject Infant Baptism; first because historically it had no part in the original Christian System, and secondly because it violates that principle of Christ's religion which demands personal choice on the part of all His followers.¹⁶³

Their teaching on the Lord's Supper was very similar to the Scotch Baptists. Alexander Campbell stated seven propositions regarding the sacrament:

- 1 There is a house on earth, called the house of God.
- 2 In the house of God there is always the table of the Lord.
- 3 On the Lord's table there is of necessity but one loaf.
- 4 All Christians are members of the house or family of God, are called and constituted a holy and royal priesthood, and may, therefore, bless God for the Lord's table, its loaf, and cup - approach it without fear, and partake of it with joy as often as they please, in remembrance of the death of their Lord and Saviour.
- 5 The one loaf must be broken before the saints feed upon it, which has obtained for this institution the name of 'breaking the loaf.'
- 6 The breaking of the loaf and the drinking of the cup are commemorative of the Lord's death.
- 7 The breaking of the one loaf, and the joint participation of the cup of the Lord, in commemoration of the Lord's death, usually called 'the Lord's Supper,' is an instituted part of the worship and edification of all Christian congregations in all their stated meetings.¹⁶⁴

The principal point of disagreement related to the presence of an elder. In small congregations it was not always possible to find someone of suitable spiritual calibre in which case the most suitable men available were chosen but not ordained, and given the title of president. They were generally appointed for a limited period in the hope that it might be possible to have elders before too much time elapsed.

With regard to church order Glasite, Scotch Baptist and Churches of Christ views were almost identical. According to the census returns of 1851 the definition of Scotch Baptist

¹⁶³

Ibid.

¹⁶⁴

Ibid, quoting Alexander Campbell, *A Christian System*, 2nd. ed. (Pittsburgh: Forrester & Campbell, 1839), pp. 317-28.

was that they 'differ from English Particular Baptists chiefly by a more rigid imitation of what they suppose to be the apostolic usages such as love feasts, weekly communion, plurality of elders, washing each other's feet.'¹⁶⁵

A key difference was in the status given to evangelists. Glas considered them extraordinary officers alongside apostles and prophets, thus they were only temporary. Campbell ranked them with bishops and deacons therefore and as ordinary officers of the church they belonged to its permanent ministry. The Churches of Christ, like the Glasites and Scotch Baptists, opposed professionalism in ministry. 'The method by which a man earns his living should not be the factor to determine whether he belongs to the ministry or the laity,'¹⁶⁶ but they did not oppose the principle of payment for services rendered for the furtherance of the Kingdom. They also believed if there were a reduplication and multiplication of talents within a fellowship each of those so gifted should be ordained into their ministry. In this way they recognized the value of 'mutual ministry', and 'the right of all who are duly qualified and gifted, to read, pray, and preach in the worship of the church, even though they are not called and ordained to the sacred offices of Presbyter or Deacon.'¹⁶⁷

A.C. Watters comments on the diversity of backgrounds from which the early members of the Churches of Christ emerged included 'the Calvinistic views and non-evangelistic attitude of the Scotch Baptist Churches in which most of those pioneer members had been trained.'¹⁶⁸ The narrow Calvinism of the Scotch Baptists contributed to unease about the use of evangelists, less on theological grounds perhaps, but more because 'there was the fear that the employing of evangelists would lead to the employment of resident ministers.'¹⁶⁹ Whilst the Church of Christ was opposed to 'professionalism' in the ministry the role of the evangelist lay uneasily alongside this rubric. Watters returns to the patch-work of backgrounds at this foundational stage quoting the editor of *The Christian Message*:

¹⁶⁵ Jones (ed.) *Religious Census 1851, A Calendar of returns relating to Wales*, Vol.2, p.21

¹⁶⁶ Watters, *History of the British Churches of Christ*, p. 41

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p.41f, quoting Robinson *What Churches of Christ Stand For*, p.80

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p.32

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

A more frequent interchange of brethren from different churches, and a more united co-operation of all the saints, regardless of our little selves, of human opinions and dogmas, would have a great effect in promoting union among the disciples, as well as the more general spread of the gospel throughout the land. Some brethren cannot visit where the church does not use teetotal wine at the table of the Lord; others contend for the use of unleavened bread; others would not give a shilling for the support of the evangelists, even should the withholding of it prove the cause of thousands sinking into eternal perdition, lest, as they say, an hireling priesthood should be raised up amongst us.¹⁷⁰

In the report of the annual general meeting held in Glasgow in 1848 eighty-seven churches were listed. Of these ten had one elder or pastor, six had two elders, and there was one with three elders. Twenty-two churches reported having one president, ten had two presidents, seven had more than two whilst the remaining thirty-one churches appeared to have neither elders nor presidents.¹⁷¹

The Wrexham Church of Christ now situated in Talbot Road was still open during the 1970s. They were usually represented on the Free Church Federal Council by Mr. H. Gilpin, and were accepted on the same basis as the other Free Churches including the Quakers. From time to time their Baptist origins and nineteenth century development from Chester Street was mentioned but no reference was made to any doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

George Sayce was appointed moderator of the Shropshire Association but in 1845 ill health forced him to resign. Following his death in 1847 there was a series of short ministries. John Clare was minister at the time of the 1851 religious census.¹⁷² The attendance figures were ninety in the morning with fifty-seven scholars. In the afternoon there were fifteen scholars and one hundred and thirty-five people attended the evening service.¹⁷³ (See table 28)

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, quoting *Christian Message*, May 1843.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, quoting *British Millennial Harbinger*, successor to the *Christian Messenger*, 1848, pp.528-29.

¹⁷² See Table 25 for the Wrexham area census figures

¹⁷³ Jones (ed.), *The Religious Census 1851 Calendar of returns relating to Wales*, Vol.2, p.157.

Enoch Griffiths served for two years from 1856 until his sudden death in 1857. The nature of the fellowship improved considerably. G.V. Price comments how during his pastorate 'peace prevailed uninterruptedly amongst the members and the church was characterised by a gradually increasing prosperity.'¹⁷⁴ John Watts came and went and was followed by Abraham Ashworth who resigned within eighteen months as a consequence of disruption within the church. Price glosses over the details referring only to 'serious division.'¹⁷⁵ The church book is equally unforthcoming recording 'when great unpleasantness having arisen he was compelled to resign.'¹⁷⁶ The thirty-three members who resigned issued a statement in December 1860:

We the undersigned members of the Baptist Chapel Chester Street Wrexham hereby declare that unless the resolution passed by that Church on 18th May 1860 calling upon the Deacons thereof to resign their office be complied with at once we shall resign our connexion with them as we could in no wise acknowledge that as an Independent portion of the Church of Christ where the voice of the majority of the members is set at defiance or not acknowledged as the ruling power therein.¹⁷⁷

The Church Book does reveal the nature of the dispute. At first glance it seems connected with an undemocratic stance taken by the diaconate in reaction to an issue at the church meeting of 18 May, but the church book only records the appointment of John Lyons as pastor on the recommendation of Dr. Angus, president of Regent's Park College, and that there was trouble in the church at Holt. However on 5 December 1862 it was resolved that 'four members, Messrs Griffith, Lloyd, Broster and S. Jones wait upon the friends at King Street to confer respecting the desireableness of reunion and report at our next meeting'.¹⁷⁸ It was also resolved that 'our pastor see the seceders at Bank Street.'¹⁷⁹

Reading between the lines two things were happening concurrently, which may or may

¹⁷⁴ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.246.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p.248.

¹⁷⁶ Chester Street Baptist Church, Church Book p.60.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.61.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p.68.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p.68f.

not have been related. Since 1858 the King Street chapel had been the home of those who left in 1844 to form the Church of Christ. It seemed that negotiations were underway for some sort of reunification, the final hurdle being mutual acceptance at the Lord's Table. It is a reasonable assumption Bank Street became used by the thirty-three breakaway members of 1860 and if that were the case it would be unlikely the secession of 1860 was related to issues of Campbellism.

The notes in the Church Book relating to the two resolutions of 5 December conclude with an explanatory note that 'the previous resolutions unanimously passed seeking reunion and the consolidation of the Baptist interest was the result of an address by our Pastor on disunion the cause of weakness and want of success.'¹⁸⁰ In addition to the discord relating to the resignation of the thirty-three members there was also unpleasantness at Holt, which although apparently confined to Holt had repercussions in the Chester Street church meetings from April to September.

By January 1864 it looked as if the negotiations with the Church of Christ were coming to a positive conclusion. On 1 January it was resolved 'the proposal made by the friends at King Street of mutual interchange at the Lord's Table be complied with and they be welcomed by us next Sabbath.'¹⁸¹ Nonetheless discussions rumbled on. There was a sticking point about the admission of unbaptised believers. On 30 January a letter from King Street was read 'respecting mutual interchange at the Lord's Table of baptized believers.'¹⁸² The Chester Street church meeting:

resolved that we inform them that we hitherto have admitted those Christians who have not been immersed to the Lord's Table and that we do not see our way at present to alter that practice, if they will unite with us as we are we shall be most glad to see them.¹⁸³

It is interesting to note the principle of the open table which had persisted since the days

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p.69.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p.70.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

of Morgan Llwyd was retained despite what might be termed friendly pressure to reverse it.

If the discussions with King Street can be said to have ended with a friendly agreement to disagree, the relationship with the “rebels” at Bank Street remained wary. The Welsh Baptists had been informed about the position.¹⁸⁴ In April 1863 there was further discussion about a letter which had been received ‘from the friends at Bank Street’. Whilst the use of ‘friends’ may have indicated the passing of time was acting as a healer, a reply was sent:

without further delay stating that the tenor of their letter and the conditions therein specified lead us to fear that the spirit of love and mutual forgiveness which is essential to a happy and prosperous reunion does not at present exist. Under these circumstances we feel it would be unadvisable for us formally to accede to their requests although some of their conditions are the habitual practices adopted and enforced by us as a Church’.¹⁸⁵

The letter ends by expressing the hope that in the not too distant future a reunion would happen. The exact nature of the disagreement is not revealed, but the statement about the spirit of love and mutual forgiveness not existing could be interpreted either as a reflection of Chester Street’s assessment of Bank Street, or as an honest recognition of their own attitude.

The correspondence relating to John Lyon’s acceptance of his call provides an interesting insight into the personal terms of the pastorate. Having made it clear there was agreement regarding the presence at communion of unbaptised believers, he informed the diaconate he would need five weeks rest and change each year and expected the church to pay the supplies during that time. He also thought it necessary ‘for health and essential comfort during the winter the chapel should be warmed in a more efficient way than heretofore.’¹⁸⁶ He would accept the salary of £70 per annum ‘till the congregation

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.69.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p.69f.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p.63.

increase the salary.’¹⁸⁷ The church’s reply acknowledged ‘with regard to what you may call holidays we will be happy to meet those wishes be they more or less and we think it quite right,’¹⁸⁸ but did not know what to say about the heating except ‘the thing is one that most of us have studied a long while and we can only say that if it be practicable it will and shall be done.’¹⁸⁹ Lyons’ four-year ministry was positive. In G.V. Price’s assessment he ‘left the church increased in numbers and in peace, and had also promoted a friendly spirit with the other churches.’¹⁹⁰ Table 4 indicates 43 members in 1864.

Lyons’ successor was Isaac Williams from Sarn. In the light of previous developments the nature of his arrival, and more particularly of his departure suggests, despite Lyons’ apparent success with attitudes and relations within the church, there was an inconsistency within the membership. Williams accepted the offer ‘to supply the office of Pastor ...for a period of twelve months.’¹⁹¹ In his reply, couched in the spiritual courtesies of the time, he would undertake the pastorate ‘relying upon the blessing of God, my own diligence and the co-operation of every member,’¹⁹² which he deemed to be the prerequisite for any blessing. One of his key achievements was clearing an old church debt. According to Price it was ‘so old as to have become unknown to most of the younger members.’¹⁹³ The church book has no record of it, only the ending of the organ debt of £2 in May 1866. Williams played his part in fund raising with a public lecture at the Music Hall on ‘Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, his character and genius.’ Despite lasting two hours the audience was impressed with the grasp of his subject and ‘the eloquent gems committed to memory ...interest in the subject was well sustained and many parts of it were loudly applauded.’¹⁹⁴ The public interest in the lecture indicated nonconformity had reached a position of public awareness and acceptability. It also illustrated that nonconformity was becoming less pre-occupied with spiritual matters and

187 Ibid, p.62.

188 Ibid, p.63.

189 Ibid.

190 Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.257.

191 Chester Street Baptist Church, Church Book, p.76.

192 Ibid.

193 Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.257.

194 Ibid.

reflecting the secular culture of the time. The church records do not indicate whether the lecture was also viewed as an indirect form of evangelism.

Price's assessment of Williams being 'indefatigable in endeavouring to raise the church from the somewhat low state in which he found it'¹⁹⁵ contradicts his assessment of John Lyons' achievement. Price could not be more fulsome in his praise of a young minister who always had a 'masterly understanding'¹⁹⁶ of every subject he tackled with 'the unique stamp of 'a mind of some strength.'¹⁹⁷ frequently displaying 'the fire of genius.'¹⁹⁸ His understanding of Christianity was 'deep and commendable.'¹⁹⁹ Yet at the special church meeting of 28 May 1866 after several members had 'expressed their opinions of the qualifications of Mr. Williams as preacher and pastor it was proposed and carried that inasmuch as Mr. Williams engagement terminates at the end of June this church do not seem it advisable to give Mr. Williams a call to become their pastor for any longer period.'²⁰⁰ His year concluded at the end of June. By 6 August the Church was inviting fifty eight year old Frederick Perkins who began his pastorate on 8 September. It is not impossible Chester Street were tempted by the glamour of a known name rather than the anonymity of a country pastor from rural Montgomeryshire. There is nothing in the Sarn records to shed any further light. 'Isaac Williams was only at Sarn for one year and sadly the Sarn Minute Book for the period has not survived. The Old Association Circular Letter for 1864 lists him as the Minister of Sarn but does not give any information about where he came from.'²⁰¹

Frederick Perkins arrived with a distinguished ministry and reputation. Raised as an Anglican he became a minister in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and then the Congregationalists before becoming a Baptist at the age of thirty-nine. He came to Wrexham having started a ministry at Leatherhead in a barn, from which a

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid.

197 Ibid.

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid.

200 Chester Street Baptist Church. Church Book p.77.

201 e-mail from Rev. Dr. Michael Collis re. Isaac Williams, 25 September 2007.

Congregational church had to be built. In his first Baptist pastorate in Battle the chapel had to be enlarged and preaching stations were planted in surrounding villages. 'In Warrington he ministered to a thousand people with much blessing but the loss of his voice cut his work short.'²⁰² Under Frederick Perkins the membership increased to sixty nine,²⁰³ but after only two years he accepted an invitation to the pastorate at Keysoe, a village to the North of Bedford.

By 1870 membership had fallen to forty-four and a spiritual low point marked by contrariness. John Brasted's pastorate began amidst optimism at the end of March. Moves were afoot to build a new chapel and fundraising schemes were under consideration. The plan was to build a church accommodating five hundred people for not more than £1000. Given there were only forty-four members it has to be asked whether this was over optimistic, a sign of expected revival, or an expression of the Victorian sense of grandeur? A few had concerns about the spiritual state of the church, but handled the matter, innocently or deliberately, in a manner that clearly annoyed Brasted.

On 6 June Chester Street hosted the annual meetings of the Shropshire Association. Whilst the 10.00 a.m. prayer meeting 'was pervaded by a fervent spirit,'²⁰⁴ the business meeting at 11.00 a.m. 'was but thinly attended.'²⁰⁵ The meeting at 2.00 p.m. included reports from the churches 'which showed the churches of our denomination in Shropshire to be weak and stagnant.'²⁰⁶ There is no proof whether the six members who wrote to the diaconate had attended the association meetings. They called for 'a meeting of the members of our church at an early date to take into prayerful consideration the present state of the church and endeavour to ascertain the cause of our want of prosperity and the blessing of God descending upon us.'²⁰⁷ Its date of composition is not given, but it was shown to John Brasted on 1 July. The next day he handed in his written resignation 'at

²⁰² Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.261.

²⁰³ Ibid p.263.

²⁰⁴ Chester Street Baptist Church, Church Book p.88

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p.89.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

the Lord's Table.'²⁰⁸ He informed the members that he had been 'obliged to spend more than my salary (£70) which I do not feel called upon to continue to do,'²⁰⁹ but added that he would not have resigned so hastily had he not been 'greatly grieved to find that a most unusual and unkind course has been secretly pursued.'²¹⁰ Having named the signatories he commented 'the design and purpose of which is too palpable to all who know anything of the past history of affairs.'²¹¹ The church book is silent on the immediate past history, but Brasted seems to imply the six members were perhaps some sort of pressure group who should have openly discussed their concerns with him first.

The following Sunday, 9 July, at a special church meeting following the evening service the resolution to accept the resignation was proposed and seconded by two of the signatories of the critical letter, B. Owen and J.B Davies. The resolution was 'handed to each member. Nineteen voted for resignation the others were neutral.'²¹² Whilst the total attendance figure is not given, abstention by the remainder implies Brasted was faced with a mixture of hostility and indifference. The handling of the matter does not suggest open and frank concern from a clear majority for spiritual renewal but manipulation by a cabal. Whatever the reasons for spiritual concern may have been, there was no great improvement as indicated four years later when D.L. Moody's mission to Wrexham is not mentioned in the church book.

It was ironic that during a period of short pastorates, numerical and spiritual decline, the old building was demolished and the new chapel constructed. It was not until the arrival of Rhys Jenkins in 1879 that an upward trend became evident. In the seven years of his ministry membership more than doubled, and debt on the new building was reduced from £200 to £80. On 4 December 1881 a religious census was taken in Wrexham. The count indicated one hundred and two attended morning worship and one hundred and forty-four

208 Ibid, p.90.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid, p.91.

the evening meeting.²¹³ By 1884 there were one hundred and ninety in the Sunday school and one hundred and ten in the Band of Hope.²¹⁴ Rhys Jenkins' interests included the Railway Mission, the Y.M.C.A., and 'an active part in the political and social movements of the town.'²¹⁵ Both of Rhys Jenkins successors continued in the same vein so that by the close of the century it could be argued Chester Street was the strongest it had ever been. A legacy of his ministry is evidenced in there being no numerical decline during the inter-regnum, as there had on several previous occasions.

According to G.V. Price, Philip Hudgell began his ministry in 1889 with a membership of one hundred and twenty-nine, one hundred and ninety-five Sunday school children and seventeen Sunday school teachers, but the figures from the BUGB *Handbook* (table 5) indicate a much smaller church with seventy-three members, and one hundred and fifty children. However by 1895 (table 6) the church had doubled its size to one hundred and forty-two members and one hundred and eighty-seven children.

Philip Hudgell's ministry from 1889 -1891 may have been under three years, but a case can be made for it being the most effective of the century in terms of the growth of the fellowship and its impact on the town. In his short ministry Hudgell baptized fifty-two people. Price records he 'loved to preach and he would preach anywhere,'²¹⁶ including fairs and amusements. He had an effective ministry at the barracks which brought a good number of the Royal Welch Fusiliers to the morning services. One of the deacons, J.G. Sudlow, began a mutual improvement society. Thirty members engaged in tract distribution on a Saturday which included invitations for the services the following Sunday. A branch of the Baptist Total Abstinence Society was formed, and two hundred copies of the *Baptist Visitor* were regularly circulated. Attendance at Communion averaged ninety, and a Bible Reading Union was formed which reached a membership of one hundred and eighty. For the first time in many years, Chester Street actively sought to help the fellowship at Holt, and John Burnham, one of C.H. Spurgeon's evangelists,

²¹³ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.281.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid, p.282.

²¹⁶ Ibid, p.291.

was engaged to conduct a week's mission in the village. Hudgell was at the centre of a network for the deepening of spiritual life. In October 1889 he attended the meeting which initiated²¹⁷ the Prayer Union of the Baptist Churches of North Wales and the Border Counties whose first president was Gethin Davies.²¹⁸ Hudgell was also involved in missions elsewhere, in Mold and across the border in Shropshire. He also regularly participated in cottage meetings on alternate weeks at a house in Rhosrobin known as the 'Hole in the Wall', and at the home of a Mr. Elias Jones.

When Queen Victoria visited Wrexham on 24 August 1889, Hudgell was one of four ministers from Denbighshire, Flintshire, and Merioneth who presented an address from the nonconformity of the area. Although couched in the sycophantic deference of the time, it referred to the grateful satisfaction at the progress made in the direction of religious freedom as evidenced in 'the opening of the Universities to Dissenters and the abolition of religious tests.'²¹⁹ In September 1891 Philip Hudgell resigned, 'with a view to undertake evangelistic work in Ireland'²²⁰ at the invitation of Rev. H.D. Brown of Dublin. During his ministry Chester Street had replicated this blend common to many other Victorian nonconformist churches in its numerical growth, evangelism and municipal status.

Hudgell's successor, Hobson Thomas, was also outward looking. A year into his ministry he was involved with Simon Jones in establishing the Nonconformist Association of Wrexham. Its objectives were to extend the Kingdom of God in the town, deepen spiritual life, help sustain the maintenance of nonconformist rights and principles, and cooperate in social reforms. In effect it became the fore-runner of the Free Church Council and played a major part in the debates relating to education and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales.

The major achievement of his ministry was establishing mission work in a rapidly

²¹⁷ Ibid, p.293.

²¹⁸ See above pp. 104-5.

²¹⁹ *The Times*, 27 August 1889.

expanding part of Wrexham known as Newtown. 'It was estimated that a population of nearly 2000 was bordering on the site and there appeared ample room for the young people without entrenching upon other's labours.'²²¹ Soon after Hobson Thomas had left Wrexham for Bedford, the new church at Bradley Road, together with Holt and Lodge which was part of Brymbo, called Joseph Beaupre who was a student from Spurgeon's College. It is interesting how quickly the new church began an enterprise that did not appear to involve its parent church although Simon Jones attended the induction. Beaupre did not stay long and left in 1901. The final separation from Chester Street occurred in the context of mid-twentieth-century theological disagreement.

Whilst Chester Street created Bradley Road, and always had a close association with Holt, there was never much enthusiasm for involvement with the English-speaking village churches in the valleys to the west of the town such as Lodge, and Salem Newydd. It is difficult to determine why this was so. Chester Street pre-dated them all, but had virtually nothing to do with their creation. There was never a great connection with the start of Ebenezer and Bethel in Cefn Mawr, nor with Mount Pleasant at Ponciau other than the individual interest of Simon Jones. Perhaps there was too much pre-occupation with being a town-centre church.

When Hobson Thomas left in 1898 Chester Street was amongst the leading nonconformist churches of Wrexham in stark contrast to its moribund state when the century began. Hobson Thomas was not enamoured with liturgy and frequently expressed his antagonism towards Anglicanism. His opposition was an individual example of one aspect of the over-arching relationship between nonconformity and Anglicanism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. On 16 March 1896 he gave the second in a series of three lectures on 'Some Principles implied in Nonconformity'. He began from the premise 'very commonly used by the defenders of the Established Church nowadays,'²²² that the Anglican Church had changed and reformed itself to such an extent the causes

²²⁰ Ibid, 28 Sept 1891.

²²¹ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.307.

²²² G.V. Price, 'Rev. Hobson Thomas: an appreciation', Unpublished MS (1970), p.29.

that had given rise to nonconformity had disappeared 'so that in this country there should be one Church for the whole nation.'²²³ In response he contrasted episcopacy and puritanism, nonconformity and separation. He believed there was a progression 'from the fetters of popery to the freedom of nonconformity.'²²⁴ The Reformation was not so much a new idea as 'a resurrection of previous forces which had been moving the world and shaking the foundations of the Papacy ages previously.'²²⁵

Hobson Thomas scorned the uniformity the established church would seek to impose on the nation, 'calling upon men to use the same words, yea, and the same comma, every Sabbath of their lives.'²²⁶ Such regularity is alien to creation for 'uniformity is as impossible in the world of mind as it is in animal and plant life.'²²⁷ He regarded the appointment of bishops as the political endorsement of uniformity. The choice of clergy and people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was a charade because 'all the while the Queen's letter is in the Chancellor's pocket telling them by name whom to select.'²²⁸

He would have been unaware of Gladstone's agonies of mind when he sought a replacement for Bishop Vowler Short at St. Asaph. In a letter to Bishop Thirwall of St. David's dated 12 January 1870 Gladstone confided 'I think it beyond doubt most important, amidst this singularly susceptible population to consider thoroughly whether any man can be found who is not only a native Welshman, but a practical, efficient, and impressive preacher in the Welsh tongue'.²²⁹ On the same day he wrote to the Archbishop of York 'I have not ...felt more strongly the gravity of any matter requiring to be done than this of the Welsh bishopric'.²³⁰ The nub of the problem was finding someone suitably qualified with the social graces acceptable to the gentry, sufficient proficiency in Welsh to be acceptable to the general public and the academic qualifications expected of a bishop. Whilst a name may have eventually emerged from

²²³ Ibid, p.96.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid, p.97.

²²⁶ Ibid, p.100.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Quoted in K.O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.32.

the Chancellor's pocket, a great deal of consideration had taken place to put it there.

Hobson Thomas was not a Welsh speaker and it does not appear that his criticism of episcopal appointment rose from a sense of emerging nationalism. Cultural revival and religious conflict had, by the 1880s, brought Welsh nationalism back to life albeit within the context of the British state. The battlefield was ecclesiastical because 'the nonconformists were seeking freedom from a predominantly English Church, not from a predominantly English parliament.'²³¹ Despite some distinguished Welsh clergy, no Welsh-speaking bishop had been appointed since the time of Queen Anne. Bishop Copleston of Llandaff, and Bishop Thirwall of St. Davids learned Welsh as adults. Copleston mastered the language sufficiently to take confirmation services and preach in Welsh. He appointed Welsh speakers to his parishes and was prepared to attack the Lord Chancellor's exercise of patronage because it offended his rules.²³²

Owen Chadwick sharply illustrated a problem of perception that lessened the impact of the Established Church and encouraged Welsh-speaking opposition. He took up a sentiment but did not attribute it to Osborne Morgan that when all English laws applied to Wales as to Yorkshire, it was natural the Church of England should be established in Wales. Chadwick drew a distinction between Wales where the Church of England was regarded as 'alien,'²³³ and Ireland where it was viewed as 'part of the English conquest.'²³⁴ For Chadwick, the call for disestablishment was partly political on the grounds that the legal basis of the Anglican Church was not appropriate for Wales, and partly sociological through the linkage of Church and gentry as 'the bishop must be respected by the upper class.'²³⁵ Hobson's *bête noire* was the manner of appointment, whether or not a bishop spoke Welsh, or had social parity with the gentry was not of particular concern to him.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Coupland, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism*, p.221.

²³² See Roger Lee Brown *In Pursuit of a Welsh Episcopate, Appointments to Welsh Sees, 1840-1905* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005).

²³³ O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* Vol.2 (London: 2nd ed. A.& C. Black, 1972), p.433.

²³⁴ Ibid, p.434.

The conflict between nonconformity and the established church was not entirely about ecclesiastical power, control and influence within the cultural setting of Welsh consciousness. Controversy also raged about doctrine, theology and liturgy which were the themes that antagonized Hobson Thomas. He affirmed 'he was personally opposed to a liturgy of any kind in the worship of God,'²³⁶ arguing that if a liturgy had been required by God it would have been found within Scripture. He scorned the creeds. The 'so called Apostles' creed' was no nearer the apostles than the fourth century. Ancient prayer books 'recognised three kinds of prayer – silent, the free, and the public or common prayer.'²³⁷ However in the Book of Common Prayer the first two had disappeared and common prayer is 'thrust upon all'²³⁸ without choice.

Having warmed to his theme, and in keeping with much late Victorian nonconformity, he declared the theology of the Church to be corrupt, 'if her theology be taken from the Prayer Book, as it is perfectly fair to do.'²³⁹ For Hobson Thomas, the Prayer Book deserved condemnation for teaching 'by the most positive and unequivocal expressions that no man has a right to judge for himself to exercise freedom of conscience in all matters.'²⁴⁰ He linked the Apostles' and Athanasian creeds with the Thirty Nine Articles which become the shackles whereby 'every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of this Book of Common Prayer, thereby robbing man of his crown of privilege – the right to judge for himself.'²⁴¹ Thus at its heart the Established Church is 'inconsistent.'²⁴² He added what he might have called the rigmarole of baptising at one end of the building and communing at the other, dressing the priests in 'all kinds of fantastic garments,'²⁴³ and in addition to keeping the Lord's Day adding one hundred and

235 Ibid.
 236 Price, 'Rev. Hobson Thomas: an appreciation', p.99.
 237 Ibid.
 238 Ibid.
 239 Ibid.
 240 Ibid, p.101.
 241 Ibid, p.102.
 242 Ibid.
 243 Ibid.

fifty other festivals. The consequence of ‘all this gorgeous ceremonial system’²⁴⁴ is to blind the worshippers to the simple truth of the Gospel. He concluded with a rallying cry the principles of nonconformity are ‘consecrated with the blood of our forefathers.’²⁴⁵ His hearers were to put on the whole armour of God and keep their powder dry because ‘all the most precious things in life are at stake.’²⁴⁶ He perceived the threat was more than a resurgence of Anglican domination through legislation affecting education. Anticipating the confederation discussions involving J.H. Shakespeare and others in the early twentieth-century, ‘Two mighty forces – Anglican and Nonconformity, God’s Bible and man’s Prayer Book are drawing nearer each other.’²⁴⁷ Without vigilance there might be an erroneous alliance. Hobson Thomas would not have been enamoured with J.H. Shakespeare, the Baptist Union’s general secretary at the turn of the century, and his quest for rapprochement between nonconformity and Anglicanism. For Shakespeare episcopacy would be consistent with the priesthood of all believers if it were ‘constitutional’ in its form rather than ‘prelatical or monarchical’ and not subject to political appointment. Hobson Thomas would have approved of the latter. However, Shakespeare would have regarded it as unchristian to refuse an Episcopal order of this kind if it was the price of reunion. He appealed to Anglican bishops to accept the free churches as ‘a true part of the Catholic Church’.²⁴⁸

Addressing the Shropshire Association in 1896 Hobson Thomas admitted to disliking the terms ‘Nonconformist’ and ‘Dissenter’. He believed they were anachronistic. Nonconformists and dissenters were so numerous inside the institution that still claimed to be the Church of England, it was ‘absurd to speak of only those who had had the frankness to come out of that church as being dissenters any longer.’²⁴⁹ The term which should be used was ‘Free Churchmen’. It was, in effect, a statement about the moral and theological superiority of those who for the sake of principle and the integrity of the

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p.103.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ P. Shepherd, *The Making of a Modern Denomination: John Howard Shakespeare and the English Baptists, 1898-1924* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001), p.114.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p.33.

Gospel had come out of the Established Church and those who had never deigned to join it. They were people who 'saw with a clearer vision, seized with a firmer grip, and held aloft with greater distinction the positive principles of the Renaissance and the Reformation.'²⁵⁰ The crux of his argument was that the Reformation might have been a matter of verbal dissent, but any negativity of expression sprang from the positive 'assent of the understanding and heart to the Will and Claim of God and an affirmation of the Gospel of His Son.'²⁵¹

Hobson Thomas' ministry was a mixture of piety and social concern. During 1895 his quarterly meetings for Bible reading and prayer were greatly appreciated. He began a Christian Endeavour, and was particularly interested in the work of the Bible Translation Society. He was especially supportive of the Baptist missionary Holman Bentley and his translation of the Bible into Kikongo. He deemed it 'an advance in Biblical Literature ...it was essential that God's Word should be translated in all its purity in the language of the people for whom it was intended.'²⁵² His attitude to political engagement was ambivalent. He moved a resolution at the committee of the Wrexham Nonconformist Association on 6 August 1896 to support a recent byelaw from the borough council outlawing street betting. He was interested in the temperance movement and presided occasionally at the Gospel Temperance meetings. However his basic attitude was to distance himself from political issues believing there was a danger if the church 'departed from its purely spiritual functions,'²⁵³ it could become embroiled in political controversies and sow 'seeds of internal disruption and even disaster.'²⁵⁴ He did however become associated with one or two politically slanted motions. On 4 March 1897 he moved a resolution at the Nonconformist Association that the Free Churches of Wrexham felt very strongly 'the British Government should not join in expelling the Greek forces from Crete unless the Turkish forces are withdrawn at the same time.'²⁵⁵ He also thought nonconformists should bestir themselves and 'do their utmost for the religion

²⁵⁰ Ibid.
²⁵¹ Ibid.
²⁵² Ibid, p.34.
²⁵³ Ibid.
²⁵⁴ Ibid.

of Jesus Christ'²⁵⁶ during the crisis of the South African war in which he was keen for nonconformists to 'stand by the old flag.'²⁵⁷

The Burials Act of 1880 was the climax of the local MP G.O. Morgan's almost personal campaign of the previous ten years. He had repeatedly brought private members bills to allow nonconformists to conduct burials in parish churchyards according to their own forms of service. In G.I.T. Machin's words 'the Burials Act removed almost the only remaining grievance of Dissent.'²⁵⁸ B.L. Manning commented about 'the slowness with which every approach to religious equality has been won in practice, even after it has been conceded in theory.'²⁵⁹ His point was illustrated by an incident at Holt twelve years after the passing of the Burial Amendment Act. A prominent member of Chester Street died and as the family lived in Holt, they requested burial in the village churchyard with Hobson Thomas conducting the internment. The vicar refused under the terms of the Burial Laws Amendment Act because the deceased was not a parishioner. That, it could be argued was a technicality. Her church membership was in Wrexham but her home was in Holt. The vicar's principal reason was he could not allow a nonconformist minister to conduct a service in the churchyard.

As the cortege arrived the vicar walked to the gates to lead the mourners to the graveside. However the procession stopped on the roadside where Hobson Thomas 'stood on a mound outside the gates and proceeded to conduct a short but impressive service.'²⁶⁰ The vicar walked back to the church alone. When the mourners finally moved to the graveside the vicar re-appeared and 'began to read the burial service even before the bearers of the coffin had taken it from their shoulders.'²⁶¹ Then the vicar 'disappeared

²⁵⁵ Ibid, p.31.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p.32.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869-1921* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1987), p.132.

²⁵⁹ B.L. Manning, *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p.322.

²⁶⁰ Price, 'Rev. Hobson Thomas: an appreciation', p. 37.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

into the church and was seen no more.’²⁶² G.V. Price commented people were indignant at the vicar’s conduct, ‘feeling that whether technically in the right or not, he had flagrantly violated the spirit and the intention of the law.’²⁶³ K.O. Morgan states that the evidence given to the Royal Commission on Welsh Churches in 1907 claimed ‘many nonconformists refused to take advantage of the act, lest they antagonize the rector.’²⁶⁴

Simon Jones, who became a pillar of the Wrexham church, trained as a printer and shortly after his marriage set up in business as a confectioner, but he is most remembered for his service within the churches and as a councillor. His contribution to the Baptist cause reflect some of the over-arching themes of his generation. The three key principles for which he stood, political freedom, the dissolution of church and state and total abstinence, mark him as a typical nineteenth-century nonconformist. He was an active supporter of movements for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England in Wales. A childhood experience made a deep formative impression that shaped his attitude to the Anglican church. He attended the National School at Wem, but as he belonged to a Baptist family he was required to attend the parish church on Sunday mornings and learn the catechism. He was told he had been given the name Simon by his Godparents, but when he asked his mother she told him it was not the case as he had no Godparents. Her answer ‘ultimately led him to realize that it was wrong to teach such things to the children belonging to a Baptist home.’²⁶⁵ When Philip Hudgell and his wife returned from their honeymoon Simon Jones said he recognized the wedding ‘as a noble protest against the old figment of the celibacy of the clergy,’²⁶⁶ adding Cardinal Newman had made a great mistake in not marrying, and if he had married a woman like Mrs. Gladstone his history would have been very different.²⁶⁷

In 1895 Jones became president of the Wrexham Nonconformist Association. At the

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.62.

²⁶⁵ G.V. Price, ‘Alderman Simon Jones J.P.’ Unpublished MS (c.1960), Chester Street Baptist Church, p.4.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p.24.

September quarterly meeting he set out his interpretation of the free church position regarding state finance and church schools in response to remarks made at the St. Asaph diocesan conference held in Wrexham the previous week. Lord Kenyon had stated Wales was a religious country and looked for the reasons for the 'severance of religious people from the Church.'²⁶⁸ Jones responded by saying 'nonconformists study their New Testament closely and do not find therein any warrant for a church hierarchy established and endowed by the state with its sacerdotal and ritualistic practices.'²⁶⁹ He referred to the Bishop of St. Asaph following the Bishop of Chester in discovering a new form of religion called 'undenominationalism' which purported to be the only form of religion that can be endowed by the rates. In Jones' opinion 'he did not know of any class of mind besides the ecclesiastical which could confuse words and ideas more than this.'²⁷⁰ He added if the bishop were with them in the meeting, at the Church of Christ in King Street, he would see how everybody had put aside their denominational flags and gathered as a group of disciples 'whose chief aim is to follow only the apostolic commands and example.'²⁷¹ 'Undenominationalism' for Jones was to be found in the co-operation of the free churches.

In Jones' opinion the Bible was an undenominational book and he directed the bishop to the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society which 'invites Evangelical Christians of every name to circulate the Word of God without note or comment throughout the world.'²⁷² The bishop, he argued, cannot do that because there are clergy who have changed and become ritualists and 'on that ground a priestly order dare not associate with nonconformist ministers.'²⁷³ He believed 'this poor exclusive spirit to be offensive to heaven, and is a vital cause of dissent.'²⁷⁴ Undenominational religion worked well in the Bible Society, the Religious Tract Society, and in the support of

267 Ibid
 268 Ibid, p. 39.
 269 Ibid.
 270 Ibid.
 271 Ibid.
 272 Ibid, p.40.
 273 Ibid.
 274 Ibid.

hospitals, orphanages and refuges for the destitute but ‘the bishop will not have it for our common schools supported entirely by public money.’²⁷⁵ The bishop was severely criticised as Jones echoed the nub of Liberal and nonconformist opposition because ‘the religious education he wishes to use state money to support, is the religion of the Church catechism and the books of the English Church Union.’²⁷⁶ In Jones’ opinion ‘the sectarian teaching of these books was calculated to warp the minds of the young, and to create more bigots than Christians, and to teach them to hate a dissenting chapel more than the public house or the theatre.’²⁷⁷ Strong words which came from strong feeling that presaged his membership of the Passive Resistance Movement against the 1902 Education Act and his appearance before his fellow magistrates in 1905 for withholding 10/8d which was the educational element in the rates.²⁷⁸

The tone of his address reflected the same passionate opposition to the established church as his puritan forefathers. For Jones the problem was more than a point of principle. He reflected an intrinsic fear of priestcraft and popery which was the sort of religion ‘which in France, Italy, and Germany has created more infidels than human and intelligent disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.’²⁷⁹ He hoped the teachers of all elementary schools would ‘assert their manhood and equal rights to religious liberty, and strike against the tyranny of the priests which threatens to coil around them.’²⁸⁰ He clearly recognized his puritan connection in his concluding remark ‘I am sure that the religious life of Wales can only retrograde into the state it was in three or four centuries ago under similar influence.’²⁸¹

Simon Jones was also active in the council chamber. He had been returned unopposed at the creation of the county councils in 1888 by the Rhos and Penycae division and served

275 Ibid.
 276 Ibid.
 277 Ibid.
 278 See chapter 5, pp. 233-6.
 279 G.V. Price, ‘Alderman Simon Jones J.P.’, p.40.
 280 Ibid, p.41
 281 Ibid

on Denbighshire County Council for nine years. He also served on Wrexham Borough Council, representing West Ward. At the first Annual meeting of the Wrexham Nonconformist Association he referred to the Local Government Act of 1894 which was, in effect, a tidying up exercise following the epoch making Local Government Act of 1888. The 1894 Act brought in 'elective parish councils and reduced the age-old influence of the Church in local government,'²⁸² but it was the Local Government Act of 1888 which contained the revolutionary legislation and 'the social position of the landed classes were swept away.'²⁸³ The result of the 1888 county council elections 'created a social transformation more striking even than the extension of democracy at national level.'²⁸⁴ In North Wales 175 out of 260 councillors were Liberal. 'Nowhere was the change more dramatically illustrated than in Denbighshire,'²⁸⁵ where Thomas Gee became chairman. For Simon Jones the victory became a mixture of fact and expectation. In fact, the 1894 Act meant 'a change from vestry government to government by the people.'²⁸⁶ In expectation it meant 'the separation of the Civil from the Ecclesiastical in the parishes must logically lead to the separation of the Church from the State.'²⁸⁷

Simon Jones twice served as president of the Shropshire Baptist Association in 1882 and 1889. On several occasions he spoke in favour of disestablishment. In June 1890 he concluded no readjustment of tithes could be satisfactory if they were not secured for national purposes such as education and the relief of the poor.²⁸⁸ In 1895 at the annual meeting of the Shropshire Association he moved a resolution approving the Bill for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Episcopal Church in Wales.²⁸⁹ At the same meeting he referred to a speech by the Bishop of Hereford in Convocation, believing it to be the best because the bishop had recognised 'the Established Church in Wales was the

²⁸² Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1869-1921*, p.210.

²⁸³ Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.302.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, p.107.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Price, 'Alderman Simon Jones J.P.' p.44.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, p.46.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

cause of social strife and political discord.’²⁹⁰ Jones also responded to a Conservative view that it would not be fair to disendow the Church without also dealing with nonconformist endowments with the confident retort that if there were ‘any nonconformist endowments of the same nature as those of the Church of England every nonconformist church possessing such endowments be disendowed.’²⁹¹

Simon Jones straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a formidable yet approachable Baptist. The key points of his presidential address to the Shropshire Association meeting at Oswestry on 6 June 1899 are testimony to his beliefs and principles. Referring to Peter’s confession in Matthew 16 he declared anything built on Peter the man would collapse. ‘The Pope was not the successor to Peter, but of the Pontifex Maximus of ancient Rome, whom he copies in pomp and tyranny.’²⁹² Christ was building his ‘society of living disciples on the confession of himself as the Messiah.’²⁹³ The church as the ecclesia comprises those who are called out, and is composed of penitent, believing, regenerate souls ...obedient to the command of Christ in baptism as a personal act of self-surrender to the authority of Jesus Christ; each community of believers ...governing itself according to the model of the first churches, electing its own officers of pastors, deacons, and evangelists, and supporting itself in temporal matters by the free-will offerings of its members.²⁹⁴ Sprinkling is ‘an ancient superstition.’²⁹⁵

The bishops were criticized because having lost their sense of integrity and principle. ‘they presented a pitiable spectacle before the Country.’²⁹⁶ ‘Black and white, truth and error, must not be sharply distinguished, but compromised, accommodated and charitably balanced to the views of moderate churchmen, lest the Church should be disendowed.’²⁹⁷

²⁹⁰ Ibid, p.47.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid, p.150.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, p.151.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, p.152.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

He attacks them for being disingenuous in their attitude that various uses and rituals ‘had been sanctioned over time which might still be tolerated to meet the tastes of all sections.’²⁹⁸ Parliament did not exercise its sovereign power over ecclesiastical affairs, and the prosecution of disloyal clergy was no longer popular because it led to ‘persecution for conscience sake’.²⁹⁹ In effect ‘the bishops were impotent to govern the Church.’³⁰⁰ In contrast, the ‘Baptist body at the present time, demanding no formal subscription to a written creed,’³⁰¹ and accepting the Bible as the rule of faith ‘was probably more united and more loyal to the evangelical faith than any other body of Christians.’³⁰²

Turning to education he thought too many Baptists passively accepted ‘the sacerdotal and priestly influences brought to bear upon their children in the day schools.’³⁰³ He referred to Lord Salisbury’s ‘command’ to the clergy to capture the Board Schools because nobody knew better than his lordship the immense value that lay in denominational schools as a training ground for the conservative party and the established church. In rural Shropshire, ‘where none of their sons or daughters could become teachers without renouncing their faith there were few alternatives for Baptists but to send their children to National Schools.’³⁰⁴ So he urged parents to claim the exemption clause in every instance so their children will not be taught the errors of baptismal regeneration, that dissent was sinful, and entering a chapel was wicked.

He concluded with three further points. Although he did not mention Morgan Llwyd, Jones gave praise to Oliver Cromwell quoting Green’s *History of the English People* that ‘a new moral and religious impulse spread through every class’³⁰⁵ under the biblical rule of the great man. He had a word for pastors. Cold, critical and negative preaching was sowing tares. Concentration on higher criticism and waxing lyrical on abstruse points

298 Ibid.
 299 Ibid.
 300 Ibid.
 301 Ibid, p.153.
 302 Ibid.
 303 Ibid, p.154.
 304 Ibid.
 305 Ibid, p.155.

only allowed 'sacerdotal leaven' to be 'spread abroad in the land.'³⁰⁶ He gave thanks to God for Spurgeon and his preaching of the simple Gospel of grace. 'When the East wind blows from the pulpit, the effect is withering to faith and to spiritual life. On the other hand, breezes from Calvary ...bring showers of blessing.'³⁰⁷ Finally, recognizing that despite the great growth in numbers conversions had not kept pace with the expansion of the population, 'at the close of this auspicious century'³⁰⁸ he commended the Baptist Union's Twentieth Century Fund which had been proposed in 1898 by the then president of the Baptist Union, Samuel Vincent. It sought to raise £250,000, half of which would be directed to church expansion in urban areas where a Baptist presence was weak. Of the rest £30,000 would be directed to raising the stipend of village ministers. Another £30,000 would bolster the Annuity Fund for ministers, £25,000 would be directed to educational concerns and £6,000 would be set aside to enable ministers to undertake further theological study. The remaining £34,000 was to be ear-marked for a new denominational headquarters.³⁰⁹ He quoted William Carey's great aphorism to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God so that in the twentieth century the Church would be prepared for the second coming of her Lord, and challenged the Baptists of Shropshire to raise 'a thousand crowns for a peace offering to the Prince of Peace.'³¹⁰

Holt is a quiet rural village on the Welsh bank of the river Dee. Unlike other villages in the Wrexham area it remained rural becoming suburban as the nineteenth century progressed whereas Cefn Mawr, Ponciau, Lodge and Bryn Teg became industrial. Its Baptist church was founded by George Sayce. He, with some of his members were concerned about the low state of morality and religion in the village. The first preaching meeting was held at 'The Cross' at which Sayce stood on a chair 'which he had borrowed from a Mrs. Banks.'³¹¹ They were invited to return to the village and for two years rented

³⁰⁶ Ibid, p.156.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, p.157.

³⁰⁹ E.A.Payne, *The Baptist Union: a short history* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1959), p.158.

³¹⁰ Price, 'Alderman Simon Jones J.P.' p.157.

³¹¹ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.237.

a room in a house for £2 per annum. A Miss Rowe attended the meetings and paid the expenses. In her will she left a bequest of £20 towards the cost of building a chapel on condition building work started within five years of her death. Three years after her death the householder where the services were held also died, and a neighbour agreed to the use of his house for the same rent but within two years he left the area and someone else offered the use of their house.

In 1826 a cottage and garden were bought for £50 and the preaching services and Sunday school were held there until it became too small and the decision was taken to build a chapel. Sayce and four of the Chester Street deacons prepared a 'Home Missionary Case to the Friends of Christianity in General.'³¹² Sayce traveled through fourteen counties with a collecting book 'and by this means collected a large sum.'³¹³ With the £20 from Miss Rowe's will, a loan of £250, the sum Sayce collected, plus a grant 'from the Baptist Fund in London'³¹⁴ construction started. The building was erected in 1827, and opened on 29 April 1828.³¹⁵ By 1850 the congregation was one hundred and fifty.³¹⁶ That was a remarkable figure if it was true given the attendance recorded in the 1851 census was seventeen in the morning and afternoon meetings and thirty in the evening as outlined in table 28.

On 4 April 1862, a long discussion occurred at the Chester Street church meeting. John Lyons reported he had found two parties each claiming the premises,³¹⁷ but the church book gives no indication about the nature of the dispute. In Lyon's opinion to open the chapel under the present circumstances 'would only lead to a repetition of most disgraceful proceedings and that step be in the strongest language deprecated.'³¹⁸ He suggested putting the matter to arbitration, but a Mr. Challinor wanted Holt to be

³¹² Ibid, p.238.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ J. Powell, *The History of Holt* (Ilfracombe: 1973) p.45.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Chester Street Baptist Church, Church Book, p.65.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

reopened 'feeling assured that there was no danger of a disturbance in so doing.'³¹⁹ The matter was put to the vote and by a show of hands twelve voted against opening with two in favour.

The Chester Street church meeting next considered Holt on 6 July. Lyons read extracts from a letter he had received from a Mr. E.W. Holland of Chester suggesting that if Holt was opened in the way that was proposed 'it would result in very serious unpleasantness.'³²⁰ On the strength of that Lyons stated he could not sanction such an act and 'strongly urged the church to withhold its sanction.'³²¹ The church book records 'the church did not express an opinion,'³²² but offers no explanation. It can only be conjecture whether the trouble at Holt was linked to the resignation of the thirty-three members and their exodus to Bank Street.

At the church meeting on 2 January 1867 there is a reference to 'members of the united Baptist Church worshipping in Chester Street, Wrexham and at Holt.'³²³ A resolution was passed that members living in Holt 'shall for the future receive their own members to Church fellowship and transmit the names of the members received to the deacons at Wrexham for insertion in the Church Book.'³²⁴ Some sort of autonomy was being sanctioned under the auspices of Chester Street. Whether this was connected with the troubles of five years earlier is not indicated. G. V. Price referred to 'the branch Church at Holt,'³²⁵ when Philip Hudgell was minister. His use of 'branch' suggests something different from a united church but he does not elaborate on the relationship. However the Chester Street church meeting of 26 March 1876 possibly sheds some light. 'The Church at Holt applied for counsel, succour, and reorganization.'³²⁶ The response was Holt 'be invited to refer all matters of discipline, of reception of members by one or two delegates

319 Ibid, p.68.

320 Ibid.

321 Ibid.

322 Ibid.

323 Ibid, p.77.

324 Ibid, p.77-8.

325 Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 292.

326 Chester Street Baptist Church, Church Book, p.100.

to be decided by the church meetings at Wrexham.³²⁷ That note is followed by a cryptic parenthesis stating ‘The church at Holt have by a trust deed the right to manage their own affairs entirely when capable of themselves maintaining the ministry of the Word of God.’³²⁸ Such a comment raises more questions than answers. Did it mean when Holt are in a position to afford their own minister or when there are sufficient capable and gifted members who are able to offer local leadership and biblical exposition? Perhaps the conflict of the early 1860s was related to an interpretation of that deed.

In June 1872 the well known Liverpool Baptist Rev. Stowell Brown ‘preached an excellent sermon to a crowded congregation.’³²⁹ The final reference to Holt was during the ministry of Philip Hudgell when he or others held a weekly meeting in the village. John Burnham, from the Pastor’s College Society of Evangelists, held a week long mission in the village when ‘seven meetings were held.’³³⁰ There were no conversions but ‘the little town was thoroughly stirred up and there was great hope of large blessing.’³³¹

An English chapel was formed in Lodge, a village next to Brymbo. There are no surviving records. W.T. Whitley records it was organised in 1860 and joined the NWEBU in 1912, adding it ‘appears happy at having no history in the course of its fifty-three years.’³³² Table 6 indicates twenty members in 1895.

Salem Newydd in Moss was an English-speaking chapel. Whilst there are no surviving records from its inauguration there are several which relate to the period from the mid 1930s to its final closure in the 1980s.³³³ It began in 1862 and had been English-speaking from its inception belonging to the DFM Association until it withdrew ‘from the

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ *Holt: A Pictorial History* (Holt Historical Society 1999) p.132 quoting from *Wrexham Advertiser*.

³³⁰ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p. 292.

³³¹ Ibid, p.293.

³³² W.T. Whitley, *Baptists of North West England: 1649-1913* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1913), p.251.

³³³ See chapter 6.

Gymanfa in 1956.’³³⁴ It also belonged to the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of BUGB. Table 5 indicates a membership of fifty nine in 1889. Table 6 shows a drop to fifty four in 1895.

Developments in the Mold area

Nineteenth-century Leeswood was a small mining community in rural Flintshire. Bethania began as a Welsh chapel in a Welsh setting which followed the trend of anglicisation within the village and by the mid 1960s it was entirely English-speaking. Since then the church has evolved in a community that almost fits the description of ‘little Merseyside beyond the Dee’. The church retained its membership with the Welsh-speaking DFM Association of the BUW, but in the later 1980s it also joined the NWEBU and the BUGB for a full participation in union life that was not possible within a Welsh-speaking association

The origins of Bethania lie in the work of itinerant Baptist preachers in the 1850s. Six people were baptised at Treuddyn in 1858 and a fellowship was started that led to the building of Berea c.1861 where a few Leeswood people became members and also held house meetings in their own village which was growing through families coming to work in the mines. By 1868 the Leeswood Baptists were able to buy a plot of land for £44-10-0d and Bethania opened in 1870.

Buckley was an expanding English town based around the ceramics industry, to which many families had moved from the potteries. The Baptist church began through a Mrs. Anne Price, ‘an elderly lady of strong Baptist conviction’,³³⁵ who lived at Lane End and attended a meeting at Leeswood in the late summer of 1875. She contacted Rev. Joseph Davies of Birkenhead Welsh Baptist church, inviting him to preach at her house in Daisy Hill. He came on 17 November to a meeting of six people. By 1876 a room was being hired in a building that had been the Lane End Wesleyan Mission. Occasionally Gethin

³³⁴ Conversation with Einwen Jones, secretary of the DFM Association, on 30 June 2006.

³³⁵ *Buckley Baptist Church, Centenary Booklet* (1989) p.1.

Davies came from Llangollen to preach and the fellowship 'found a good friend.'³³⁶ The *Chester Chronicle* reported Gethin Davies 'from the Baptist College Llangollen conducted services and preached very finely.'³³⁷ A baptismal service was held in 1883 on the banks of the river Alyn when two candidates were baptised by J. Davies of Brymbo. The weather was very bad but a large company witnessed the occasion and took part.³³⁸

In 1882 the DFM Association resolved to support a missionary in connection with the Baptist cause in Buckley.³³⁹ However the effort appeared to have foundered. The *Chester Chronicle* reported that a heavy cloud overshadowed the Baptist cause in Buckley. The Mission Room had been closed for some time but had re-opened through friends and members of Grosvenor Park Baptist Chapel, Chester. It had been supported by the DFM Association 'but their efforts to get English preachers were not successful ...this will not happen with the Grosvenor Park Church taking over.'³⁴⁰ T.W. Pritchard relates that the church was struggling again in 1888, when Gethin Davies came to their aid. He 'happened to be passing and found a feeble few gathered together.'³⁴¹ Their problem was 'the local Welsh Association had failed to find English speakers.'³⁴² In 1885 the DFM association established a committee to work with the NWEBU 'to prepare English causes.'³⁴³ Nothing ever came from it and the DFM's assistance came to be regarded as unreliable.

Gethin Davies introduced the church to Richard Cory who promised £300 towards a new building on condition the chapel was free from debt. He also guaranteed the minister's salary for twelve months.³⁴⁴ It is possible Pritchard's understanding of being debt free had been clouded as the *Chester Chronicle* reported how Gethin Davies had introduced the church to Richard Cory and as a consequence of his donation of £300 there was 'every

³³⁶ T.W. Pritchard, *The Making of Buckley and District* (Trowbridge: Bridge Books, 2006), p. 177.

³³⁷ *Chester Chronicle*, 7 July 1877.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, 3 February 1883.

³³⁹ *Ibid*, 4 November 1882.

³⁴⁰ *Magazine of the Buckley Society* No. 5 October 1979, p.2.

³⁴¹ Pritchard, *The Making of Buckley and District*, p. 177.

³⁴² *Chester Chronicle* 4 November 1882.

³⁴³ Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, p.320.

³⁴⁴ *Magazine of the Buckley Society* No. 5 October 1979, p.2.

prospect of opening free of debt.³⁴⁵ The new building opened in 1889. By 1890 Richard Cory was so pleased with the church he wanted another one started down the road at Nant Mawr and offered to invest £1000 if £200 could be raised by the end of June. The target must have been reached because Bethel opened later in the year. However by 1914 it had closed and the congregation returned to Ebenezer. Writing in 1923, Thomas Crapper thought 'the Baptist denomination never seemed to take healthy root in Buckley.'³⁴⁶ Table 5 shows a membership of fourteen in 1889.

Baptist activity in Mold began in the opening years of the century. John Pritchard of Northop Hall who had been baptised in 1802 and became a member of Ruthin Baptist Church³⁴⁷ rented a room in Mold and two people were baptized in the river Alyn. In 1812 Edward Roberts was appointed to Mold, Llyn y Pandy and Halkyn. The chapels in the latter two places have long been closed, and he 'can be regarded as the first Baptist minister of Mold.'³⁴⁸ However Ebenezer, Mold, only counted their ministers from when the chapel in Wrexham Street opened in 1888 with Gethin Davies as minister. Edward Roberts, Hugh Williams who came in 1837, and H. Gwerfyl James who was inducted in 1866 are not counted,³⁴⁹ as the original chapel, Bethabara, was located in Glanrafon. During Gwerfyl James' ministry the membership increased by thirty-one. 'The brethren were not satisfied with the building,'³⁵⁰ and the members wanted a bigger and better chapel. Eventually the new chapel was built in Wrexham Street and became known as Ebenezer.

If the original chapel was at Bethabara, the religious census of 1851 reveals some interesting statistics for Mold Baptists. They met in the room above the market place which had space for four hundred. The attendance figures were counted as one hundred in the morning, one hundred and eighty in the afternoon and two hundred and forty in the

³⁴⁵ Pritchard, *The Making of Buckley and District*, p.177

³⁴⁶ Ibid

³⁴⁷ See page 5

³⁴⁸ Dean, *Centenary booklet Ebenezer Baptist Church, Mold 1880-1980*, p.3

³⁴⁹ Ibid, p.1

³⁵⁰ Flintshire Records Office D/DM/720/141

evening. There are no figures for Sunday school scholars, but there is a remark that the Baptists 'lately commenced in the building mentioned'. The entry is authorized by Evan Evans, minister.³⁵¹ Either there was a slump in membership or attendance bore no relation to the membership because, as table 4 indicates, the membership in 1864 was thirty-nine.

An examination of the Trust Deeds of 1894 provides an interesting insight into the purchasers, grantors, and trustees. The deed of 19 June 1880 is missing. There is a statutory declaration made by the then Secretary, J.D. Griffiths, in December 1970 that he knew the deed to be missing and had 'made full enquiries as to its whereabouts.'³⁵² Of the purchasers, there were two brothers who were both grocers, a pattern maker, a labourer and a collier. The grantors included another collier, two more labourers, another grocer, and three Baptist ministers. They were Rev. Joseph Davies of Brymbo, Rev. Edward Evans of Holywell, and Rev. H. Cernyw Williams of Corwen. Four of the trustees came from Mold: two colliers, a gardener, and a washman. The remaining eight all came from the Cefn Mawr area, and included one master mason, and one mason, a roll turner, a miner, a labourer, a clerk, a draughtsman, and the manager of a brick works.³⁵³ Besides revealing the occupations, and social status of those involved, the deeds reveal the Welsh-speaking connections through Brymbo, Cefn Mawr, Ruthin and Holywell.

The building of the new chapel in Wrexham Street was dogged by financial difficulties. The foundation stones were laid on 17 July 1876 when 'there was but a scant gathering.'³⁵⁴ When the building reached window height a bill for £50 was paid, but a subsequent bill for £80 could not be met. Various efforts were made including bazaars, and concerts. The deacons who were sent to seek help from the Gymanfa (association)

³⁵¹ Jones (ed.) *Religious Census 1851, A Calendar of returns relating to Wales*, Vol.2 North Wales, p.120.

³⁵² Flintshire Records Office D/DM/720/124, Statutory Declaration.

³⁵³ Trust Deeds Ebenezer Baptist Chapel, Mold 1894.

³⁵⁴ Dean, *Centenary booklet Ebenezer Baptist Church, Mold 1880-1980*, p.5 quoting the *Chester Chronicle*. No date given.

meetings in Brymbo were advised to sell the building and the land,³⁵⁵ but the members would not be dissuaded. William Saunders relays the story of John Jones who came from the Vale of Clwyd and became a tailor but had to return from Manchester, where he had settled, for health reasons.³⁵⁶ ‘An important man in the lead mines’³⁵⁷ had given a loan but the interest had not been paid so ‘the chapel door was shut next Sunday.’³⁵⁸ In order to keep the doors open John Jones walked the ten miles to Holywell, where the man lived, paid the interest from his own pocket and then walked back to Mold in time to open the doors for the service at 10:00am. There is a folk story told by some of the present members of Ebenezer of a family who sold a cow in order to contribute to the cost of the windows.³⁵⁹

The arrival of Gethin Davies as pastor was a major contributory factor in overcoming the financial difficulties. The talk of the times was about the scientific wonders of the phonograph and the telephone. Gethin Davies gave public lectures on both which brought in a lot of money for the cause.³⁶⁰ He also published a card with twenty lines for twenty names so that friends could sign up for 1/- a time and each card would then contribute £1 to the funds. ‘A great effort was made in this direction’.³⁶¹ William Saunders relates how his parents wondered how they could help and decided to regularly ‘put 3d into grandma’s jug in the corner cupboard,’³⁶² although they could hardly afford it. Gethin Davies was invited for tea, and when the table was cleared ‘the old jug was emptied ...Gethin Davies could not keep back the tears,’³⁶³ as everybody knelt and praised God in gratitude.

If Gethin Davies worked hard towards raising money, and made his own sacrifices through the terms of his salary both as pastor and by his money raising efforts, he could

355

Ibid.

356

Flintshire Records Office D/DM/720/141, p.1.

357

Ibid.

358

Ibid.

359

Conversation with Mrs. Olive Peters of Graianrhyd on 3 October 2007.

360

Flintshire Records Office D/DM/720/141.

361

Ibid, p.2.

362

Ibid, p.3.

363

Ibid.

also be stinging in his criticism of the stinginess of his fellow Baptists. He circulated a letter in Welsh, presumably to the churches in the DFM Association:

**The New Chapel of the Welsh Baptists in Mold
To the Baptist Church in.....**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Permit me to bring to your attention the above matter.

On Wednesday 5 June, 1878, in the Rhuthin Festival Conference the matter relating to the Mold Chapel was raised before the Conference. In the spirit of the one who came to seek and keep the ones that were lost I took upon myself the building of this chapel on the condition that I would have the support and sympathy of the Festival. Here is the decision that was taken at the time:

That we support the Rev. G. Davies' plan with the view to assist the Mold Church to continue with the new chapel.

As a result of this I commenced the work earnestly and because raising funds was the most important matter, I sent a collection book to nearly every church in the Festival.

Again, I was afraid that the books would not receive the attention they deserved, and because of this in the Quarterly Meeting Conference in Llanrwst on Wednesday October 2nd 1878, I offered to give my services free of charge for the year 1879 to any church that would invite me for a Sabbath to preach on condition that I could make a collection amongst the members and listeners. I did not want to hinder the Festival collection. Here is the decision that was taken in Llanrwst:-

That we wish to offer our warmest gratitude to Professor G. Davies, Llangollen for undertaking the matter of the Mold chapel, and rejoice in the fact that he intends visiting the neighbouring churches on its behalf. He will offer his services free of charge on a Sunday to any church that wishes do, on condition that he receives permission to collect subscriptions towards the above chapel.

The above decisions were published in "Seren Cymru" and the "Greal", a means for everyone to consider them.

It would be a sacrifice of £50 to say the least, in my annual salary for me to give every Sunday of the year 1879 to make collections for the Mold Chapel but I was willing to do this to verify my vow to the Festival.

What has the Festival done? How many collection books were returned?

Only three, and one of them without anything in it. How many invitations did I receive to preach and collect? Only two.

Is this the fruit of the “enthusiastic sympathy” in Rhuthin, and the “gratitude” and “rejoicing” in Llanrwst? I would never have believed it.

Now the chapel is near completion, and will be opened next Easter Sunday.

Dear brothers, the burden lays heavy on us day and night, and is fast becoming heavier, while the opening day approached. We believe that not much will be done after the opening day. Now is the appropriate time. In the name of God and His good work, come out to assist us, or otherwise our arms might wither in the effort.

Yours Cheerfully,
Gethin Davies
The Academy,
Llangollen
23rd February 1880 ³⁶⁴

Gethin Davies ended his ministry in 1888, and was followed by the appointment of one of his students from Llangollen, Thomas Shankland. ‘Gethin Davies had a very high opinion of him,’³⁶⁵ and they remained firm friends. He started on a salary of 10/- per week. ‘It is on record that Ebenezer was £250 in debt at the time which was soon cleared.’³⁶⁶

Further evidence of the emergence of nonconformity from the shadows of subversive suspicion into the lime-light of acceptability can be measured by the list of dignitaries who were prepared to be patrons of the Grand Bazaar organized by Ebenezer, Mold, in the summer of 1888.³⁶⁷ Eight MPs accepted patronage. Samuel Smith was ‘the austere and humourless Presbyterian cotton broker who sat for Flintshire’.³⁶⁸ In his later years a fear of the ‘infiltration of Roman Catholicism into Britain became his overriding

³⁶⁴ Translation by Mrs. Rhiannon Jones, Mynydd Isa, of the original document Capel Newydd y Bedyddwyr Cymreig yn Y Wyddgrug, X/EL 429, Bangor University Library.

³⁶⁵ Dean, *Centenary booklet Ebenezer Baptist Church Mold*, p.8.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.8.

³⁶⁷ Grand Bazaar brochure. X/EL429 pam Bangor University Library.

³⁶⁸ Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.93.

passion,³⁶⁹ and in that respect he was an archetypal dissenter of the old school. John Roberts represented Flint District and was Chair of the Methodist Association of North Wales. W.S. Caine was a Liberal Unionist. The Hon. G.T. Kenyon was the Conservative MP for Denbigh District. The Rt. Hon. G.O. Morgan was the Liberal MP for Denbighshire. W. Rathbone was a 'Liverpool merchant who sat for Arfon'³⁷⁰ and was a Liberal who opposed home rule. T.E. Ellis was the Liberal MP for Merioneth. K.O. Morgan presents him as a man 'regarded by many as the "Parnell of Wales"',³⁷¹ who drew 'the moral that race-consciousness should heighten the awareness of nationality and that Welsh and Irish nationalism should be merged with Social Democrats in a great campaign for social regeneration.'³⁷² The eighth MP was W. Davies, politically a Conservative and ecclesiastically an Independent. For the times, perhaps unwittingly, Ebenezer displayed a remarkable political and ecclesiastical ecumenism. Other patrons included the high sheriff, the chairman of quarter sessions, and the county treasurer. Alderman Simon Jones of Wrexham was also a patron. What might appear as social trimming for a public occasion also indicated the close relationship between nonconformity and the political world towards the end of the century.

Conclusion

In drawing together the salient features of nineteenth century developments in north east Wales, the over-arching effect of social geography enabled Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, to become an English-speaking church. Its formation was also aided by a sense of protectionism for the Welsh language in the face of creeping anglicisation by a migrant population, and as a general reaction to any political threat to the Welsh language as exemplified in the blue books' controversy.

The predominance of political liberalism enabled the Baptist churches to flourish

369 Ibid
370 Ibid
371 Ibid, p.68.
372 Ibid, p.70

alongside their nonconformist counterparts. It also created an atmosphere within which calls for disestablishment encouraged freechurchmen such as Hobson Thomas and Simon Jones to voice their opposition to the Established Church. The proximity of nonconformity and the Liberal party also provided a platform on which Simon Jones of Chester Street could express his views on Baptists and education.

Within the Mold area linguistic factors were predominant as indicated by the trustees of Ebenezer, Mold, who were appointed in 1894. The difficulty with the DFM association experienced by Ebenezer, Buckley, was to become a precursor for prolonged linguistic and administrative problems with the local Welsh association and the BUW during the twentieth-century.

As yet associating played little part in English Baptist church life in North Wales. The Welsh-speaking background in the formation of Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, provided a natural link to the DFM association. By its historic links with the Shrewsbury church, Chester Street, Wrexham, belonged to the Shropshire association in which it played a positive role, but there was little if any connection with Ponciau and Penycae and the churches that were formed in Bryn Teg and Salem Newydd. The little church at Holt was an exception, founded by George Sayce during his ministry in Wrexham. The NWEBU, although founded in 1879, was at the instigation of the coastal churches. The statistics shown in Tables 4, 5, and 6 are gleaned not from the NWEBU but the Baptist Union Directory. Associating, in the formation of the English churches, was local and informal rather than regional, particularly through the personal commitment and enthusiasm of Gethin Davies and Simon Jones.

SUMMARY OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

CHAPTER THREE NORTH EAST WALES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Churches

Baptist

Bryn Teg	Salem Newydd
Cefn Mawr	Ebenezer founded in the 1860s
Holt	Founded c 1840
Lodge	English church developed from Welsh church at Tabernacl Brymbo
Penycae	Zion founded in the mid 1870s
Ponciau	Mount Pleasant founded in the early 1880s
Wrexham	Chester Street The principal Baptist church in north east Wales Bradley Road Daughter church of Chester Street founded in 1899

Church of Christ

Wrexham.	Founded in 1844. Established in Bank Street in the nineteenth Century
Cefn Mawr	
Allington	An area south of Rossett also known as Trevalyn

Places

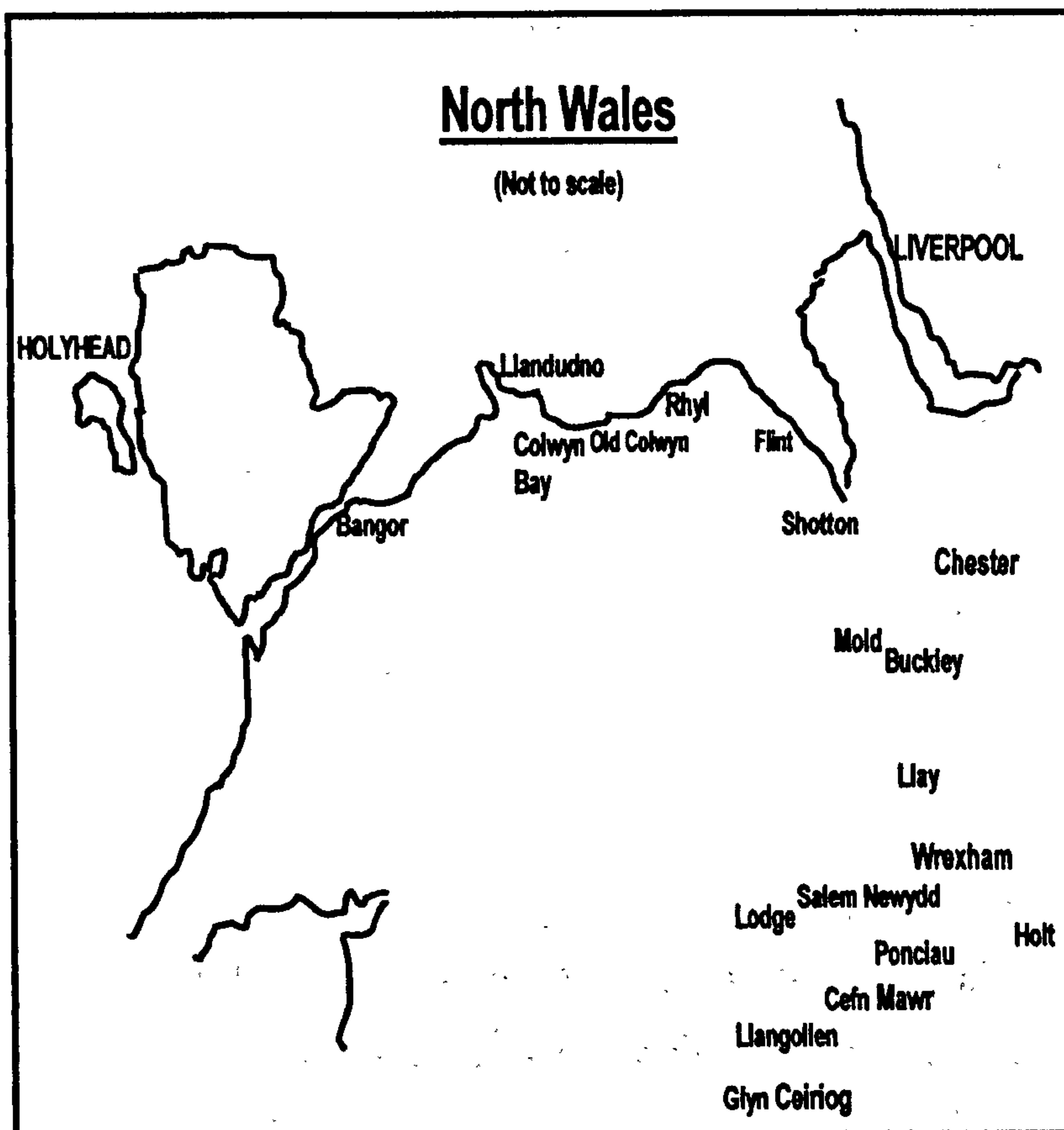
Brymbo	Industrial village with a large steel works c.3 miles north west of Wrexham.
Buckley	Small industrial town c. 3 miles north of Mold. Originally developed with the ceramics industry
Bryn Teg	Village between Brymbo and Wrexham
Cefn Mawr	Industrial village c. 7 miles south of Wrexham
Holt	Village on the Welsh bank of the river Dee opposite Farndon on the Cheshire side

Leeswood	Former industrial village c. 4 miles south east of Mold
Llanelwy	The Welsh name for St. Asaph. Small cathedral city c. 6 miles south of Rhyl.
Llangollen	Small town on the river Dee c. 12 miles south of Wrexham. Home of North Wales Baptist College until its move to Bangor in 1892
Llay	Former mining village c. 4 miles north of Wrexham. Established in the 1920s as a mining village for Llay Hall and Llay Main coal mines
Mold	Market town and administrative centre for Flintshire
Moss	Small village close to Brymbo
Penycae	Farming community also with links to the coal mines c. 6 miles south of Wrexham
Ponciau	Often referred to as Ponkey. Mining village c. 4 miles south of Wrexham. Closely linked with Rhosllanerchrugog. Aberderfyn was part of Ponciau.
Rhosllanerchrugog	Mining and farming village. An important Welsh-speaking cultural centre c. 5 miles south of Wrexham
Shotton	Small town almost on the border with Cheshire. Developed around the John Summers steel works: now part of the Corus corporation
People	
Richard Cory	Member of the Cory family with mining and shipping interests. A generous benefactor of Christian causes throughout Wales
Gethin Davies	Principal of North Wales Baptist College from 1883 Very involved with church planting and encouraging emerging Churches
Philip Hudgell	Exercised a short but effective ministry at Chester Street Wrexham from 1889-91
J.R. Jones	Powerful preacher and personality who became an influential advocate for Sandemanianism

Simon Jones	Deacon at Chester Street member of Denbighshire County Council and Wrexham Borough Council. Closely involved with both the Shropshire Association and the NWEBU. Staunch supporter of nonconformity in local public life. Joined the Passive Resistance Movement in 1902. Member of Council of the Congo Training Institute in Colwyn Bay.
William Jones	Born in Gresford. Became a major publicist for the Scotch Baptists. He also had a period of involvement with the Campbellite churches.
John Lyons	Minister at Chester Street 1861-65
A.J. Parry	Minister at Seion and Tabernacl Cefn Mawr. Played a key role in the development of the English cause at Ebenezer Cefn Mawr.
John Ratcliffe	Came to Wrexham from Manchester c.1802. With his wife, Mary, they played a key role in reviving Chester Street after the pastorate of Robert Roberts and the effect of Sandemanianism.
Robert Roberts	A weaver who became minister at Chester Street in 1794. Strongly Sandemanian
George Sayce	Minister at Chester Street 1821-47
Thomas Shankland	Followed Gethin Davies as minister at Ebenezer Mold. Moved to the Welsh Baptist church in Rhyl. Subsequently became librarian at Bangor University
Hobson Thomas	Exercsed an effective ministry at Chester Street Wrexham from 1892-98

CHAPTER FOUR

**THE COASTAL CHURCHES IN THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY**



The English Baptist churches in North Wales stretch along the eastern border and the northern coast. As already noted, Newbridge and Glyn Ceiriog had gravitated to the Welsh Association during the eighteenth century. That such a pattern developed is due more to linguistic rather than geographical factors, and clearly indicates English culture and language did not penetrate the Celtic heartland or the western coast, as can be seen from the distribution of the churches on the map.

Geographical considerations had a particular bearing on Holyhead, and the resort towns of Llandudno, Rhyl and Colwyn Bay through the coming of the railway. For Holyhead, the railway replaced the historic mail coach route to Ireland and created the dramatic growth of the port. A proposed alternative mail service planned by the Great Western Railway with the construction of a main line from Ludlow to Porth Dinlleyn did not materialise, which coupled with the securing of the government mail contract by the London and North Western Railway in 1860 ensured Holyhead 'a predominant position in the conveyance of mails.'¹ The enlarging of the harbour and the construction of the breakwater was only achieved through an influx of English-speaking labour from Ireland and England to a predominantly Welsh-speaking town. Charles Rigby, one of the leading figures in the construction of the breakwater 'took a great deal of interest in the Baptist cause',² and gave his full support to the founding of the English chapel in Newry Street by designing the building.

If commercial geography lay behind the development of Holyhead, social geography was behind the development of the resort towns of Llandudno, Rhyl and Colwyn Bay. The railway transformed anonymous villages into the playground of the industrial North West of England. Llandudno was already becoming a well established resort when, in 1861, land was leased from Mostyn Estates, and Zion English Baptist church was built the following year. The surviving documentation does not indicate who initiated the lease. However it was 1876 before the cause was formally constituted as a church. The chapel

¹ O.S. Nock, *British Steam Railways* (London: A. & C. Black 1961), p.50.

² *New Park Street Baptist church Holyhead. Centenary booklet* (1960), No page nos.

was built 'for the express need of many English visitors'³ and was only used in the summer season. The pulpit was supplied from mid-June to mid-September by ministers from different parts of England, although the early 'promoters of the project'⁴ did include Dr. J. Pritchard of Llangollen Baptist College and his brother William who acted as treasurer until his death in 1871. Rev. C. Williams of Accrington became a pivotal figure in arranging an informal committee of oversight which, with the trustees, also examined the accounts. Amongst those who became involved were C.H. Birrell (Liverpool), Dr. Alexander MacLaren (Manchester), C. Prince (Birmingham), J.L. Witby (Leicester), and J.P. Chown (Bradford).⁵ In 1873 the overseeing committee proposed continuing the services through the winter and invited Francis Wills of Kingsgate Chapel, London to lead the experiment. The home mission society of the Baptist Union granted £20 towards expenses. After the winter there was a balance in hand of £117.⁶ Wills was invited to do the same for the following two winters. By 1875 there was a Sunday School of over thirty scholars, a mid-week service and a Bible class. The first baptismal service was held on 30 August 1876 when Elizabeth Jones was baptised in the new baptistery of the Welsh chapel. The next day the English Baptist church was formally constituted. Stowell Brown of Liverpool presided, the devotions were led by Rev. R. Evans of Llanelli, and Rev. P. Scovey spoke on the nature of a Christian church. Francis Wills, who had been appointed the pastor, read the draft of a proposed constitution and 'the Chair gave the right hand of fellowship to eighteen new members'.⁷ Wills resigned in 1878 on health grounds, and John Raymond was invited to become minister.

According to the church's 1962-63 Year Book it grew from eighteen members in 1876 to 118 members by 1890. *The Baptist Union Handbook* for 1889 (Table 6) indicates only 51 members. Had the church confused summer season congregations with the actual membership? In October 1879 the NWEBU held its district meetings at Zion.⁸ According

³ Zion English Baptist Church, Llandudno, *Year Book 1962-63*, No page nos.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

to T.M. Bassett that was the year in which the NWEBU was formed,⁹ in which case these would have been the first or second meetings of the new union. Although it can not be proved as the archival evidence is lost, a case can be made for the initial concept of the NWEBU as an associational organisation emanating from the broad-ranging external ministerial involvement in the formation of the Llandudno church. In its early years the NWEBU mainly involved the coastal churches.¹⁰ Table 5 shows Cefn Mawr, Buckley, Ponciau and Llangollen did not belong, but had had joined by 1895 as seen in Table 6. Two Welsh-speaking churches at Abergele and Llanfairfechan also belonged. The reason for their membership is unclear but may be connected with the annual influx of English visitors during the summer. The details can not be corroborated as the first minute books are lost.

The formation of the English Baptist church in Rhyl was similar to Llandudno being only open for the summer season to accommodate visitors, but with a greater influx from the Midlands.¹¹ Table 4 shows both churches were listed in 1864 but as neither was formally constituted there were no membership figures. Local Baptists and influential industrialists who had summer residences in the town, initiated the establishment of Sussex Street. A subscription list was opened and the land was bought for £387-12-6d.¹² The foundation stone was laid in July 1862. The building opened for public worship on 18 June 1863. The church was in a sound financial position and golden sovereigns were not uncommon in the offerings.¹³ Leading preachers of the day occupied the pulpit and addressed crowded congregations. Spurgeon came in October 1863, when 'the large Calvinistic Church' was borrowed specially for the occasion.¹⁴

The Midlands connection is confirmed in the appointment of the original trustees, five of whom lived in Birmingham. Two of them, Thomas Griffiths, a tinsmith, and

⁹ T.M. Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists* (Swansea: Ilston Press, 1977), p.337.
¹⁰ Bangor University Library. X/EL 537 ENG, *Circular Letter of the NWEBU 1895*.
¹¹ *Sussex St. Baptist Church, Rhyl Centenary Booklet* (1968). No page nos.
¹² Ibid.
¹³ Ibid.
¹⁴ Ibid.

Charles Shaw, a jeweller, reflected the industrial and commercial nature of the city. Stowell Brown of Liverpool was also a trustee. His frequent visits to Llandudno, and Wrexham serve as a reminder of the strong connection between Liverpool and North Wales. At the opening of the church Stowell Brown preached in the morning. Nathaniel Haycroft of Bristol preached in the evening and on the Sunday. The celebrations continued on the following Tuesday when Charles Vince of Birmingham preached in the morning and William Brock of Bloomsbury Chapel London preached in the evening.¹⁵

It was not until 1866 that steps were taken to form the church and complete the trust deeds in which the church was described as a 'society of Protestant Dissenters called Particular or Calvinistic Baptists'.¹⁶ The minister was required to be a Calvinistic Baptist elected by a two thirds majority of the members 'present and voting'.¹⁷ Members need not 'adhere to the denomination',¹⁸ but must confess faith toward God and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. The deeds also stipulated that the premises could be used from time to time for secular purposes on the vote of a two thirds majority.¹⁹ There was a longstanding Masonic connection with Sussex Street which lasted until recent times. The original circular window above the front entrance included a Masonic pentagram.

Colwyn Bay also owed the greater part of its growth as a resort to the arrival of the railway. Its development occurred slightly later which is reflected by both the formation of the English Baptist church in the early 1890s, and the comments in a guide book of 1882. 'A number of lodging houses and two or three hotels have been erected ...much of Colwyn Bay will eventually be covered, we imagine, with detached and semi-detached villas'.²⁰

Issues of language had played a formative part in the separation of the Welsh and English

¹⁵ *Rhyl Record*, 26 June 1863.

¹⁶ Sussex Street Baptist Church, Rhyl, Trust Deeds.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ A. Roberts, *Gossiping Wales* (London:Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), pp.124-5.

churches in Holyhead, Cefn Mawr, and Bangor. In *Religion and Politics in Mid-Eighteenth Century Anglesey* Nesta Evans highlights the predominance of Welsh within the island. There was a tendency in parts of Wales for Anglican services to be held in English. 'Samuel Williams, Vicar of Llangunllo and Llandyfriog 1697-1722 asserted that certain clergy were in the habit of preaching to monoglot Welsh congregations in English'.²¹ In 'some parts of Wales it is said that the Methodist Revival brought to the people for the first time their religion in their own tongue, but in Anglesey the evidence suggests that it was the English sermon that was unusual.'²²

Whilst the English cause in Holyhead began in the middle of the nineteenth century, there is no reason to suppose that there had been any great change in the balance of language or culture during the intervening years. This is borne out by John Lewis' remarks about English services in Holyhead prior to the building of the English Baptist Church in 1860. William Griffith, a Congregational minister in Holyhead, found English-speakers were gravitating to the Congregational Church for the evening service partly because 'the Parish Church was closed in the evening.'²³ However the arrangement was deemed 'injurious to the Welsh cause,'²⁴ and the English service was terminated. Griffith concluded 'the results very soon proved that we did the right thing',²⁵ though he did conduct an English service on Wednesday evenings. Lewis gives an explanation in his comment that Griffith 'became wholly convinced that two causes in diverse languages could never prosper in the same edifice'.²⁶ He quotes Griffith's remark that he 'nearly destroyed the cause in the attempt, and nearly went without a cause in either language.'²⁷ In Lewis's opinion it was 'quite another matter to make provision for English visitors for a season, or to establish churches for English residents'.²⁸ He also makes the point there was no-one more willing to help the English than William Griffith who was a 'constant

²¹ G.N. Evans, *Religion and Politics in Mid-Eighteenth Century Anglesey* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1953), p.80, footnote 1.

²² *Ibid*, pp79-80.

²³ *Ibid* p.43.

²⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.44.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

supporter of the North Wales English Causes Association from its inception to the end of its life'.²⁹

Griffith's experience provides a clear indication why English causes, of whatever brand of nonconformity, developed in separate buildings from Cefn Mawr to Holyhead. The imposition of English in civic life was regarded as a cultural threat that touched a nerve of national identity. A century later, during the early to mid-1960s, prolonged discussions between the English and Welsh Baptist churches in Wrexham regarding the creation of a bilingual pastorate came to nothing.³⁰ Separate development was not regarded as a matter of hostility but practicality. The decision to build their own church taken by the English Baptists in Colwyn Bay was based on the practicality of having their own place of worship.³¹ Like their counterparts in Holyhead, they had every reason to be grateful for the support and interest of the Welsh Baptists without whose encouragement the English causes would have floundered.

William Morgan, minister of Bethel Welsh Baptist church in Holyhead, had a concern for the many English-speaking incomers who were building the breakwater. He probably experienced similar thought processes to William Griffith in realising the necessity of a separate English chapel. Without the initiative of William Morgan and Bethel it is doubtful whether the English church would have begun as well or as soon as it did. Morgan 'had little sympathy towards new causes in Holyhead independent of the mother chapel.'³² However the increasing number of English speakers in the town through the construction of the breakwater created a sense of inevitability. At a church meeting on 24 February 1860 Bethel agreed to build an English chapel costing £500. The sum of £60 was to be paid from pew rents at the old chapel (presumably Bethel) towards the minister's stipend. An invitation was to be sent to J.D. Jones, Rickmansworth, to become

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See chapter 6, pp. 296-302

³¹ See below, pp.195-6.

³² W.T. Whitley, *Baptists of North West England 1649-1913* (London: Kingsgate Press, London, 1913), p.336.

the minister, and the trustees were to be responsible for £500 or £600 until that amount was collected.³³ The building contractor was Henry Parry whose estimate came to £1031. J.D. Jones declined the church's invitation and a call was given to William Davies from Pontypool Baptist College. The ordination service was held at Bethel.³⁴ Seventeen members from Bethel transferred to Newry Street, including W.D. Jones who became the secretary. Table 4 indicates that there were thirty members by 1864.

The new church adopted the name New Park Street in honour of C.H. Spurgeon who conducted services at Ucheldre Park to celebrate the laying of the foundation stone. A marquee holding 4000 was erected for the occasion, and the London and North Western Railway Company issued cheap fares from all parts of North Wales.³⁵ The event was advertised in the *North Wales Chronicle* for 1 September 1860 whilst the following edition carried a full account of the proceedings. It was fitting that the English 'Prince of Preachers' should lay the foundation stone of a cause that can be traced through its Welsh antecedents to the pioneering work of Christmas Evans, the prince of *Welsh* preachers, who had established the Baptist presence in Anglesey. After the stone laying Spurgeon visited his widow, 'and after seeing her circumstances he promised to send her 5/- per week to the end of the year, but she continued to receive that amount until she died.'³⁶

The minute books and other records from 1860 until the mid-1880s are lost. Until the appointment of Gomer Evans in 1894 the period from 1886 continued with controversy and contention. The saga surrounding the transfer of Mr. and Mrs. Williams of the Cambrian Vaults from Bethel Welsh Baptist chapel in 1886 provides a telling insight into attitudes to temperance within Victorian nonconformity. They were informed by letter on 19 July that 'your transfer of church fellowship ...is duly to hand and might be heard before the officers at their monthly meeting on 26 July.'³⁷ However correspondence

³³ *100 years of Christian Witness 1861-1961*, Newry Street Baptist Church, Holyhead, Centenary Booklet (1961).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/4, officers' minute book New Park Street Baptist Church,

between the diaconates of the two chapels indicated that Mr. and Mrs. Williams were not in membership at Bethel at the time of their transfer request, having been dismissed because they were publicans. Bethel had appointed a committee to 'see into church affairs.'³⁸ A subsequent church meeting agreed 'but not very unanimously,'³⁹ to dismiss all publican members who were at the time in the church,⁴⁰ because 'such were not the real sort of persons of which the church of God should be composed.'⁴¹ The matter 'was not done publicly and to prove that this committee had ample authority, Mr. Williams (Mona House, the Bethel secretary) two or three Sundays after, passed Mr. Williams with the communion elements and from that day Mr. Williams never came to chapel.'⁴²

Besides highlighting an example of Victorian antipathy to matters alcoholic the ongoing correspondence between the two chapels also illustrates the lengths to which, on occasions, churches investigated transfers of membership. A letter from Bethel dated 21 August 1886 stated that whilst 'no charge whatever was substantiated'⁴³ against Mr. and Mrs. Williams, a transfer could not be made 'in as much as Mr. and Mrs. Williams left us before the matter was laid before the church'.⁴⁴ The Bethel secretary, Robert Williams of Mona House, concluded by expressing his sorrow that they had left and prays for their spiritual prosperity and every member at New Park Street. In a further letter dated 27 August Robert Williams acknowledged 'another communication from you respecting Mr. and Mrs. Williams to whom I gave a letter of transfer,'⁴⁵ and expressed annoyance that New Park Street apparently chose to ignore it by 'calling visitors and making a series of enquiries.'⁴⁶ He reiterated that 'no charge was brought against either of them',⁴⁷ and considered it unnecessary to enter into further details considering 'the transfer the

Newry Street, Holyhead.

38 Ibid.
 39 Ibid.
 40 Ibid.
 41 Ibid.
 42 Ibid.
 43 Ibid.
 44 Ibid.
 45 Ibid.
 46 Ibid.
 47 Ibid.

conclusion.’⁴⁸ New Park Street were not convinced there was a valid transfer and wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Williams on 31 August informing them that a resolution had been passed by the officers at their monthly meeting the previous day to the effect that ‘they are of a decided opinion that the transfer is incorrect,’⁴⁹ claiming it was fully asserted by written testimony that they were not members of Bethel when the transfer was granted.

New Park Street could have admitted Mr. and Mrs. Williams on profession of faith and their obduracy perhaps indicates a hidden agenda which took three years to surface when the matter reappeared on 1 April 1889. The officers’ meeting agreed that the ‘question of publicans becoming members be put to the next church meeting,’⁵⁰ and it was proposed that ‘Mr. Ellis waits on Mrs. Williams.’⁵¹ At the next officers’ meeting on 30 April he reported Mrs. Williams ‘expressed her desire it should not come before the church in a general way.’⁵² There is no reference to Mrs. Williams at the next church meeting on 2 May, and as there are no subsequent references in the minute books it would appear that was how the matter concluded. In this instance temperance served as a veneer of Victorian respectability as neither church was prepared to accept them as members although nothing was substantiated against them.

During 1887 to 1893 there were fraught relationships amongst the leadership. Deidre Beddoe’s comment that ‘the chapels were patriarchal institutions where power was concentrated in the hands of older men who exercised rigid control over their congregations’⁵³ was certainly true for the New Park Street diaconate in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The fractious atmosphere of Holyhead’s officers, and church meetings was the worst amongst the North Wales English Baptist churches at this time.

The storm broke at the church meeting on 2 February 1888. Rev. Crathern expressed

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ D. Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: a history of women in twentieth-century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.11.

dissatisfaction that the secretary's report did not contain 'the whole of the business done by the officers in the last quarter.'⁵⁴ The secretary replied that he was only aware of one omission in the acceptance of Mr. and Mrs. Roberts from Llandudno whom the officers had accepted on behalf of the church. Crathern wanted the secretary to include concern about his omission in the minutes and also informed the meeting that 'other omissions had taken place.'⁵⁵ The secretary declined and a 'very heated debate'⁵⁶ ensued. Crathern then complained that he had not received an agenda which 'put him in a very awkward position having to ask continuously what was the next item to be brought forward.'⁵⁷ He also complained that the books had not been audited whereupon the treasurer commented that 'the pastor had obviously come to the meeting with a niggling disposition.'⁵⁸ Crathern added fuel to the fire by saying that he regretted having two such men as secretary and treasurer. He referred to the forthcoming deacons' election on Sunday night when more members would be present saying that 'he considered it right to publicly guide the members in their selection.'⁵⁹ The secretary retorted ominously that he would decline to serve the voting papers if the pastor interfered. 'It was undesirable that any minister who may only be working with such officers for a short time, should influence the church members before the papers were in their hands.'⁶⁰ He commented that 'all ministers were the same as £200 or £300 would remove any of them from their officers or church.'⁶¹ He was right. Most ministers in the late nineteenth century would have moved on for that level of salary because the average stipend was between £80 to £100p.a. At the officers' meeting on 11 June, Crathern having resigned, the secretary was instructed to write to Gethin Davies 'for a definite supply with a view to the pastoral charge of this church'⁶² with a salary of £80p.a.

⁵⁴ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/1, church meeting minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid..

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Crathern's salary was in line with other ministers in North Wales. In 1874 Samuel Thomas at Chester Street, Wrexham, received £90p.a.⁶³ In the mid-1870s W.H. Bishop, the first minister at Penrallt, Bangor, initially received £53p.a., which was later increased to £73p.a.⁶⁴ His successor, W.R. Saunders, received £73p.a.⁶⁵ As late as 1911, the salary offered at Colwyn Bay English Baptist church had only risen to £132p.a.⁶⁶ In contrast, as the minister of a large city church who was frequently invited to preach at special occasions elsewhere including North Wales, Stowell Brown's income rose to £900.⁶⁷

There were repercussions at subsequent meetings of officers and church. In the officers' meeting of 22 March 1888 it was agreed that the statements made by Crathern should remain in the officers' minute book but were 'not to appear in the church minute book or be read out at a church meeting.'⁶⁸ The internal politics were more important than openness. At the following meeting, on 20 April, the officers agreed that the pastor was not to be present or preside at officers' meetings.⁶⁹ At the next quarterly church meeting it was requested that the minutes from 2 February be re-written 'and nothing but resolutions and business done be entered.'⁷⁰ A sanitized set of minutes was produced including the resolution that the pastor was not to preside at officers' meeting. However the original version was not erased from the minute book. The following church meeting was specially convened to consider the pastor's resignation. A proposition was brought that it be accepted, to which an amendment was added that it be not accepted. Surprisingly the amendment was carried unanimously. The pastor thanked the church for their sympathy but 'he could not remain pastor of this church.'⁷¹ About twenty-four years

⁶³ G.V. Price, *The Old Meeting, Its Times, Ministers and People; The History of the Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham* (Wrexham: E. Jones and Sons [1930]), p.263.

⁶⁴ R. Griffith, *History of the English Baptist Church Penrallt Road Bangor: from its formation In 1872 to the year 1904* (Bangor: C. Littler, 1905), p.24.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.26.

⁶⁶ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book, 1909-1927.

⁶⁷ K. Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales 1800-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.15.

⁶⁸ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/4, church officers' minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/1, church meeting minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁷¹ Ibid.

later an Anglican critic commented the 'power of a diaconate can ruin a ministry. One man can do it by sinister methods he can force a good man to resign, while the deacon himself is seated on his throne like a Czar,'⁷² adding 'if the secret side of our nonconformist life were written and published, it would be sad and painful reading.'⁷³

New Park Street appeared to find itself in calmer waters following Crathern's resignation, but strong undercurrents persisted. At the end of August 1888 the church called Samuel Roberts. In February 1889 New Park Street considered joining the NWEBU but as the church would not be in a position to defray the expenses of the delegates it was carried 'that the matter lay over for some time.'⁷⁴ The decision to join was eventually made on 30 October 1890 as 'the means of bringing our church into fellowship with the other English churches in North Wales.'⁷⁵ This was a clear indication that for both Holyhead and the union associating was a formative factor.

By the summer of 1891 Samuel Roberts had moved on but the church records are silent about his departure. He had chaired the church meeting on 30 April but the meeting held on 6 August carried a proposition the church needed a pastor with a salary of £80p.a.⁷⁶ On 20 August the church meeting agreed to invite John Williams to preach with a view to the pastorate. A proposition that 'the next pastor called would be a total abstainer from all intoxicating drinks'⁷⁷ is particularly interesting. There is no reference in the church records to whether or not Crathern was an abstainer. Given the issues relating to Mr. and Mrs, Williams it would be unlikely that he had frequented public houses, and there is no certainty whether he permitted alcohol in the manse. An amendment 'that the church should not interfere'⁷⁸ whether or not the next pastor was a total abstainer was defeated but the proposition was only carried by eight votes to seven. Total abstinence was not an

⁷² Viator Cambrensis, *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation* (London: I. Pitman, 1912), p.15.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/1, church meeting minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

all conquering force in New Park Street.

The difficulties of the previous two pastorates were eclipsed by the hope of a fresh start. The secretary congratulated the church meeting on 4 February 1892 for ‘the unity and concord which exists’⁷⁹ and referred to John Williams ‘making himself at home in our midst’⁸⁰ and hoped that ‘all members will combine and hold his hand with the battle against sin and Satan.’⁸¹ John Williams presided at the officers’ meeting on 19 February, the first reference to the minister presiding at the officers’ meeting since April 1888,⁸² indicating that Samuel Roberts had also been excluded. The fresh start appeared to be confirmed.

The undoing of John Williams’ ministry was neither temperance nor dominant personalities but finance. He proposed a scheme for clearing the church debt of £260 by ‘going to different towns in England and Wales to collect.’⁸³ The scheme was ratified at a special church meeting convened on 18 March 1892. Collecting books were to be printed and signed by the officers. By the quarterly church meeting on 28 April Williams indicated £30 was promised with £5 already in hand. Yet the ensuing twelve months became dogged by financial difficulties exacerbated by a fall in membership and the failure of the scheme. In the year to February 1893 the membership declined from sixty-three to fifty-six. The treasurer reported a balance of £6-12-4d,⁸⁴ which he deemed to be small and suggested that the church should consider some form of regular giving ‘such as that in vogue with the Methodists.’⁸⁵ John Williams was invited to preach on regular giving. At the same meeting it was proposed that the secretary write a letter of thanks to the students of Bangor Baptist College for the ‘self-denying manner in which they had

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/4, church officers’ minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/1, church meeting minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead,

⁸⁵ Ibid.

served the church during the absence of the pastor on his collecting tour.’⁸⁶

At special church meetings convened on 16 and 19 February 1893 John Williams reported that £23-16-0d had been collected. No reference was made to the £30 promised in April of the previous year but it was agreed to pay £33 off the debt.⁸⁷ An in-house collecting scheme was approved in which members would have a card for their offerings to be marked against the amount which they indicated they could give. However by the officers’ meeting on 24 April the balance sheet was only £0-11-7d. The question was asked how the church was to pay its way. The matter was ‘thoroughly looked into’⁸⁸ and the officers concluded that they ‘could see nothing to clear their way than for the pastor to give three months notice as his ministry was quite a failure.’⁸⁹ The church meeting recognized the work of the deacons and accepted the resignation of the pastor⁹⁰.

Bad feeling between deacons had not been resolved, as indicated by the resignation of W.H. Jones. In January 1893 the officers’ meeting considered his letter of resignation as a deacon dated 8 November 1892 in which he indicated that he and his wife were seeking a transfer to Bethel but gave no reason. The meeting also discussed a second letter of 5 January in which he reconsidered his decision as several members had asked him not to go. Robert Ellis objected to any withdrawal of resignation declaring that if Mr. Jones was ‘to come into office again he would resign.’⁹¹ A long debate ensued but as not all the officers were present the matter was deferred until 23 January by which time Jones had submitted a further letter of resignation which was accepted. The annual general meeting on 2 February agreed that Jones’ transfer ‘be granted when sent for.’⁹²

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/4, church officers’ minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/1, church meeting minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁹¹ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/4, church officers’ minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁹² Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/1, church meeting minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

The Holyhead deacons also displayed a high-handed manner in the case of a Mrs. Lewis. At the officers' meeting at which they accepted W.H. Jones' second letter of resignation they also considered her request to transfer to Bethel. They decided to write to her asking 'is there anything in the way of this church to transfer her to Bethel?'⁹³ There is no record of her reply, but at the meeting on 25 May the officers decided not to grant a transfer but strike her name off the members' register.⁹⁴ The minutes offer no explanation.

In July 1893 the church gave a unanimous call to T.R. Williams from Bangor Baptist college. The salary was to be £90p.a. for the first twelve months and £100 thereafter. No reference was made in the August church meeting to any reaction from T.R. Williams who had declined the invitation, but the December meeting considered three further names in order of preference. The first was Rev. T. Shankland of the Welsh Baptist church in Rhyl. The second was Rev. J. Griffiths of Llanfairfechan. Both declined but Gomer Evans, a student from Bangor College, accepted. The salary offered to all three candidates was £80p.a.

Given the difficulties of attitude and relationships at this time it is hardly surprising there was a fall in membership. The 1889 *BUGB Handbook* indicated fifty-eight members but by 1895 membership was forty-six as shown in tables 5 and 6. Although both factors would have been contributors, it is not possible to determine whether the numerical decline was due more to the ineffectiveness of John Williams' money raising scheme or the underlying poor relationships within the church. Were it possible, it would be interesting to discover whether Shankland and Griffiths declined the call to Holyhead because, as seasoned ministers in North Wales, they would have been aware of the church's reputation in comparison with the possible naivety of Gomer Evans seeking his first pastorate.

⁹³ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/4, church officers' minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Gomer Evans ministry, which started in the second half of 1894, might have been even shorter than his two immediate predecessors as he offered his resignation almost immediately. At a special church meeting on 1 December he was asked to reconsider and the church, by a show of hands, asked him to stay. The minutes offer no specific reason for the resignation but it was probably financial. At the same meeting it was proposed that a fund be started and two Sunday collections be given to Gomer Evans 'for the purpose of making up about £24 to be added to his stipend as an inducement to stay.'⁹⁵ An amendment was passed that a number of the members would become responsible for adding the £24 to his stipend. It is unclear whether there had been indications of a shortfall in salary or that it was tantamount to an increase bringing the salary to £104p.a. However, despite having to meet the demands of the stipend the finances were gradually improving. The balance presented at the church meeting on 20 April 1899 being £22-1-10d.⁹⁶ Gomer Evans stayed until 1906 when he accepted a unanimous call to the Welsh Baptist church in Water Street, Rhyl.

Two matters from the 1890s are worth noting. The first concerned communion. At a special church meeting on 16 August 1894 the church opted for closed communion by twenty-one votes to eighteen and it was declared that the church 'would henceforth be strict Baptist.'⁹⁷ The decision was reversed at the annual general meeting on 30 January 1902 so that the church 'would practice closed membership but open communion.'⁹⁸ The second involved the growth of Sunday school work and the establishment of a mission hall in Baker Street. Its history belongs to the twentieth century, but began at a special church meeting on 12 November 1899 when the officers accepted an offer from Mr. Prichard for his land in Baker Street 'to build an iron and wooden building on a lease for twenty one years as a mission hall in connection with this place of worship.'⁹⁹ Table 7

⁹⁵ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/1 church meeting minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Llangefni Record Office, WM/2075/1, church meeting minute book, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

shows that by 1905 there were ninety children attached to New Park Street and a further sixty-three at Baker Street.

Table 7 also shows that by 1905 membership had risen to 74 at New Park Street with another 16 at the Baker Street Mission. In the ten years of Gomer Evans' ministry membership had doubled so it was little wonder that the minutes of the special church meeting of 6 September 1906 record 'we sincerely regret to have to accept the resignation.'¹⁰⁰ His ministry was one of the most popular in the history of the church. Arthur Shaw wrote 'of the ministers I remember best was Rev. Gomer Evans,'¹⁰¹ who baptized him in 1902. It is a reasonable assumption that as a twelve-year-old brought up within the church he would have had some awareness of the controversies surrounding the previous three ministers, and as someone who served as church treasurer for twenty years his comment has credence regarding Gomer Evans' successors. Shaw also offered a comment on Gomer Evans marriage to Miss Relf, the church organist, that 'many people were surprised as they were never seen together.'¹⁰² He was clearly a pastor with discretion.

Penrallt, Bangor, like its counterparts in Cefn Mawr and Holyhead, had its roots in the Welsh church. A small nucleus of English-speaking Baptists worshipped at Penuel. Mary Jane Cosier was the prime mover, but it appears that she never became a member herself.¹⁰³ She came from Holyhead where she had started a boot and shoe business before moving to Bangor with her husband Edward, an Englishman from Liverpool who had no Welsh. W.O. Roberts was a Welsh-speaking market gardener whose wife spoke only English. The minister at Penuel, J.D. Williams, was sympathetic to their need to worship in English, and first held English services in 1865. Griffith Roberts believed that

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *One Hundred Years of Christian Witness*, New Park Street Baptist Church, Newry Street, Holyhead, 1960.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ G. Roberts, *History of the English Baptist Church, Penrallt Road, Bangor: from its formation in 1872 to the year 1904* (C. Littler, 1905), p.11.

it 'does not appear that the Welsh church appreciated these efforts.'¹⁰⁴ His remark however relates to the concern of some of the Penuel members that holding English services would adversely affect what they perceived to be a Welsh-speaking church. His statement does not reflect the support that was given by Penuel's ministers.

Linguistic disapproval was strengthened by ecclesiological disagreement. Amongst the English contingent in Penuel a Mr. Wedgewood had asked for membership but medical advice indicated that it would be dangerous for him to be immersed. 'The brethren decided to accept him into full membership without being baptised, but some protested and left Penuel to worship at Llandegfan.'¹⁰⁵ The matter was taken to the Caernarfonshire association which decided against the action of the church so Mr. Wedgewood stopped attending communion. J.D. Williams had also moved to Pembroke Dock, and the English services were discontinued.

Mary Cosier hired the Rechabite hall for English services with support from David Jones who was the next minister at Penuel. She also approached Thomas Dawson, the superintendent of the Liverpool necropolis, and arranged for him to come and preach at regular intervals.¹⁰⁶ She tried to get C.H. Spurgeon to help but her effort was unsuccessful because Penuel would not support it.¹⁰⁷ The emerging English church was helped by the arrival of Thomas Betts, the new coachman at Vaynol Hall, who also began worshipping at the Rechabite Hall. The move towards formation as a church was consolidated when Arthur Dawson and Thomas Betts decided that four people seeking baptism should be immersed. Penuel allowed their premises to be used for the occasion.¹⁰⁸

Between 1872 and 1874 the new church had a nomadic existence. The trustees of the Rechabite Hall received a complaint from the owner of the British Hotel across the road

¹⁰⁴ Ibid p.7.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid p.8.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid p.9.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid p.10.

stating that the Sunday School children ‘constituted an annoyance.’¹⁰⁹ The church then used a room at the rear of the Market hall but was ‘driven away from there.’¹¹⁰ Griffith Roberts offers no explanation. Their next home was the use of a partially completed building at 27 Caellepa. The fellowship made an agreement with the owner, William Williams, to complete the building at their own expense. They also rented a room in a nearby house for 1/6 per week. However ‘a coldness arose’¹¹¹ between William Williams and the church. Griffith Roberts suggested it was ‘on account of the singing,’¹¹² but W.G. Croker was more precise stating that it was ‘caused by a dispute over the leading of the singing.’¹¹³ In 1874 W.O. Roberts was able to purchase land in Penrallt Road from Rev. George Farrar Roberts, an Anglican, without disclosing that it was for the building of an English Baptist chapel. ‘It was feared that if the reason for the purchase was made known there might be some difficulty in acquiring the land.’¹¹⁴ The ground was steep and rocky, but W.O. Roberts persisted. It is calculated that he loaded over three hundred cartloads of stone for the building and could sometimes be seen on site at 4.00 a.m.¹¹⁵ Whilst some help was received from Charles Davies, the minister at Penuel, the English fellowship also secured the services of W.H. Bishop who was a photographer in Rhyl. Bishop traveled to Bangor on most Sundays to preach and in effect became the first pastor. Initially he received no salary but he was given hospitality and travel expenses.

The trust deeds describe the church as ‘The Society of Particular Strict Baptists.’¹¹⁶ The signatories show that the social make-up of Penrallt was very similar to other English Baptist churches in North Wales. Two trustees were bakers and provision dealers, whilst a third was a provision dealer. There was an upholsterer, a builder, W.O. Roberts the market gardener and W.H. Bishop the photographer. The exception was James Taylor of

¹⁰⁹ W.G. Croker, *Penrallt English Baptist Church Bangor 1872-1972* (Bangor: 1972) no page nos.

¹¹⁰ Roberts, *History of the English Baptist Church Penrallt Road Bangor*, p. 12.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p.14.

¹¹² *Ibid* .

¹¹³ Croker, *Penrallt English Baptist Church Bangor 1872-1972*, no page nos.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁶ Bangor, Penrallt Baptist Church Trust Deeds.

Rhyl who is described as ‘Gentleman.’¹¹⁷ The deeds contain the usual strictures about the appointment of trustees, and the calling of a pastor. The qualification for voting was by those who have been communicants at least four times in the previous six months ‘unless prevented by illness ... or from being in servitude or residing at a great distance.’¹¹⁸ An unusual clause, in comparison with the deeds of some of the North Wales churches, was one stating that ‘baptism by immersion and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of the Church to be continued until the second coming.’¹¹⁹

The ministry of W.H. Bishop began successfully. After the opening of the new building he continued for twelve months as nominal pastor, then the church paid him a salary of £53 p.a. Shortly after the opening he gave a series of weekly addresses that were widely advertised:

Last night of a doomed city
Last night of a lost soul
Last hours in the life of a King
Last prayer of a dying Christian
Last words of a departing friend
Last enemy

However the relationship between Bishop and the deacons became strained. His resignation was not entirely straightforward and illustrates the delicate balance of relationship which sometimes existed between pastor and deacons in Victorian nonconformity regarding expectations and status.

From 2 May 1877 the opening sentence of the church meeting minutes always included the phrase ‘for maintaining piece [sic] and order in the House of God.’¹²⁰ The spelling was not corrected for several months. Ironically 1877 saw very little peace and order. Problems erupted with the appointment of new deacons during the church meeting of 2 May. Two names were under consideration: John Owens and Robert Beck. W.H. Bishop’s suggestion of electing each deacon separately was agreed. John Owens was

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

elected by a 'show of hands unanimous with only one dissentant that being the pastor.'¹²¹ John Owens declared that 'after the remarks made by the pastor he declined to take the office.'¹²² Robert Beck then declined on the grounds of not having sufficient time. 'After a few remarks from different members with reference to the intended bazaar the meeting which was rather a stormy one terminated.'¹²³

Repercussions surfaced at the following church meeting on 12 June when the secretary reported that Bishop had resigned 'owing to that which transpired at the church meeting on Monday last.'¹²⁴ Bishop felt his that 'opportunity for doing good here has passed.'¹²⁵ If he had been unwise in openly voting against John Owens he added fuel to the fire by threatening to disclose his reasons for leaving 'in a letter to the public press or if the church and congregation desire it in a meeting convened for the purpose.'¹²⁶ In the ensuing discussion John Owens proposed that the resignation be accepted but did graciously add that thanks should be given to God 'for the success which attended his labours among us,'¹²⁷ and prayer should be made that 'God will bless his labours more abundantly where his lot may be cast.'¹²⁸ Some members brought an amendment requesting Bishop not to resign. The church also proposed that his salary be increased by £20p.a. on condition he 'preach twice on Sundays, attend the Bible class, and be present and conduct the prayer meeting on Wednesday nights and all other meetings which may arise in the usual course.'¹²⁹ He was offered a twelve month contract from 23 September which would have been the date of his resignation.

Bishop's reply illustrated his attitude to ministry and makes an interesting comparison with aspects of current thinking regarding the nature of Baptist ministry. Having thanked

¹²⁰ Penrallt Baptist Church, Bangor, church minute book.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

the church for their kindness he added that in their letter 'I find much more law than love.'¹³⁰ His objection to a contract was not about length of time but the concept of a contract per se. It 'seems to me more like engaging a clerk or an apprentice at so much per year.'¹³¹ He did not regard himself as an employee. However the modern phrase of 'office holder' relates more to technicalities with H.M. Customs and Revenue to protect the self-employed status of Baptist ministers in pastoral office. Bishop made a valid point regarding the relationship between church and pastor, but objected to what would now be regarded as a job description, saying 'you proceed to lay down the law in respect of my duty ... I believe I know the duties of the ministerial office.'¹³² He would withdraw his resignation 'providing I have liberty to work in my own way as hitherto,'¹³³ but the church must be prepared to co-operate with him. It could be argued that Bishop was seeking to protect his freedom for the prophetic role of ministry in preaching and expounding the Word of God. On the other hand a church is at liberty to express its expectations from the pastor. It is possible Bishop's insistence on living in Rhyl played a significant part in his non-attendance at meetings to the detriment of the church. He acknowledged that 'If I come I shall have to let my house in Rhyl and reside in Bangor.'¹³⁴ It may well have been that his attitude to ministry was compounded with maintaining personal domiciliary arrangements.

Bishop had a forceful nature. It was evident by openly voting against John Owens and in his threat to make the reasons for his resignation public. It was more evident after refusing to withdraw his resignation and accept the terms of a one year contract when he began rival services in the Market Hall which continued in the High Street for about eighteen months. It was also evident in his attitude to Penrallt itself. At the church meeting on 2 October strong remarks were made regarding his conduct. Bishop had written to the caretaker, without the knowledge of the deacons, asking him to remove the platform chair, the cushion for the Bible, the collecting boxes by the door with their

130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.

contents, and 'several other things the property of the trustees of this chapel.'¹³⁵ The church meeting considered that Bishop and the caretaker 'have made themselves answerable to the law,'¹³⁶ and decided to write saying unless he 'returns the communion table and leaves off preaching in Bangor the deacons and the church will prosecute him.'¹³⁷ The church took action against the members who had left to join Bishop's meeting requesting them to be present at the next communion service or their names would be erased from the church book.¹³⁸ The meeting also decided that as serious division had been caused in a church of twenty five members the Lancashire Association should be informed. Although the NWEBU had not yet been formed, the incident illustrates a sense of need for mutual support, discipline, and guidance within the Baptist concept of associating.

The minutes also reveal how the church reacted in the aftermath of the dispute with Bishop. There was an element of caution in the proposal which was carried unanimously that candidates for membership who had been interviewed by Bishop 'should have at least one messenger appointed by the church'¹³⁹ to enquire into their moral character and 'if a work of grace has begun in their soul.'¹⁴⁰ Should the testimony of the messenger be deemed satisfactory those concerned would be accepted at the next church meeting. A further proposition contained an element of vindictiveness, 'that taking into consideration the evil effect of allowing the ladies (or the female part of our congregation) to discuss subjects at church meetings of which they know very little thereby impeding the business we hereby propose that in future they will not be allowed to speak in church meetings unless it be to answer questions. Carried.'¹⁴¹ There were five men and four women at the meeting. W.G. Croker wrote 'what part the women members of the church had played in the controversies that had arisen over the conduct of Mr. Bishop it is impossible

135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.

to say.’¹⁴² Perhaps their attitude had been more charitable.

The origins of the English Baptist church in Colwyn were more closely tied to the Welsh church than was the case in other North Wales towns where English churches emerged from the Welsh. N. Tucker asserts Welsh-speakers opened Tabernacl on Abergele Road in 1888 but were followed by English-speakers who had shared use of the building.¹⁴³ Gwilym Hughes, superintendent minister of the DFM association of the BUW, believes the original plan was for Tabernacl to be an English-speaking church which had become predominantly Welsh-speaking by the time it was built.¹⁴⁴ The DFM association meetings at Llangollen 22-23 June 1886 record that ‘we support the Colwyn Churches to found an English cause in Colwyn Bay, and that the brethren J.J. Williams, Rhyl; B. Evans, Rhuddlan and T. Evans, Fforddlas be an assistant committee.’¹⁴⁵ Prior to founding the cause prayer meetings were held at a house in Station Road which belonged to Owen Jones, ‘Druggist.’¹⁴⁶ The Tabernacl trust deeds are headed ‘English Baptist Chapel’ and refer to ‘religious worship by the Sect or Society of Protestant Dissenters called Particular Baptists.’¹⁴⁷ Tucker was apparently mistaken.

In 1890 the services were advertised weekly in the local paper as English at 11.00am and 7.30pm: Welsh at 9.45am and 6.00pm.¹⁴⁸ The pastor was Rev. W. Hughes who was also the Director of the Congo Training Institute in Nant y Glyn Road. The English members began to raise funds for their own building in 1891, and managed to buy a site on Abergele Road in 1893 where they built a tin tabernacle. As in other towns the division between the two languages was more a matter of practicality than hostility.

¹⁴² Croker, *Penrallt English Baptist Church Bangor 1872-1972*, no page no.

¹⁴³ N. Tucker, *Colwyn Bay its Origins and Growth* (Colwyn Bay: Colwyn Bay Borough Council, 1953), p.192.

¹⁴⁴ Conversation with Rev. Gwilym Hughes, superintendent minister of Denbigh Flint & Merioneth Assoc of Baptist Union of Wales.

¹⁴⁵ Letter dated 19 June 2007 from Rev. Gwilym Hughes, quoting DFM Assoc minutes 22-23 June 1886 (No 20).

¹⁴⁶ Letter dated 19 June 2007 from Rev. Gwilym Hughes.

¹⁴⁷ Charity Commissioners London File 77893.

¹⁴⁸ *Colwyn Bay and North Wales Weekly Advertiser* Issues for 1890.

Although it is not directly relevant to this study reference should be made to William Hughes, the former BMS missionary to the Congo, who founded the controversial and ill-fated Congo Training Institute in Colwyn Bay. When the institute opened in 1891 Hughes gave up his Welsh pastorates in Llanellian, Old Colwyn and Colwyn Bay but briefly retained the pastorate of the English Baptists. Several of the NWEBU churches contributed to the institute and Simon Jones of Wrexham was a member of its council. The balance sheet in the annual report for 1891 shows Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, contributed £1-11-3d, Colwyn Bay gave £21-11-2d and Wrexham £2-2-6d.¹⁴⁹ However by 1908-9 funds had 'fallen off considerably.'¹⁵⁰ The donations from towns with English congregations, which may also have included contributions from the Welsh churches, show Bangor gave 5/-, Holyhead £4-2-2d, Llandudno £3, Rhyl £4-7-0d and Cefn Mawr gave nothing.¹⁵¹ No contributions were listed from Colwyn Bay, Old Colwyn, Mold, Buckley, Wrexham and Ponciau. The institute closed in 1912 having lost a libel case against Horatio Bottomley of *John Bull* magazine and Hughes was declared bankrupt.

The establishing of Old Colwyn English Baptist church belongs to the twentieth century but originated with the Welsh Baptists. It began under the leadership of Spinther James who was ordained at Llanellian in 1861. The Welsh chapel began as a Sunday school in 1862 when the new parson insisted all children were to attend his morning service. Forty children were sent home from school on Monday for non attendance at church on the Sunday, as required by church day-schools, and as a consequence a British School was begun. Classes were held in the hayloft of the Plough Inn whilst the school was being built.¹⁵² English meetings began in the home of Esther Parry until 1891 when the meetings transferred to a corrugated iron building. The main building was opened in 1906.

¹⁴⁹ Bangor University Library: Report of Congo House Training Institute for African Students, 1891

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. Report for 1908-9

¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁵² *Old Colwyn English Baptist Church: a short history* (2005), p.1

Conclusion

The over-arching national and regional influences were the same for the coastal churches as for those of the north east. Commercial and social geography were prime factors in the foundation of the churches at Holyhead, Llandudno and Rhyl. Language issues also played a key role in their establishment. The formation of the churches in Holyhead, Bangor, and Colwyn Bay demonstrated the perceived impracticality of Welsh and English congregations sharing the same building. Their origins also clearly illustrate the good will of Welsh-speaking Baptists in both their recognition of the need for English-speaking congregations and the generosity of their support, particularly from William Morgan in Holyhead. Old Colwyn was an exception and came into being as a reaction to the enforcement of Anglican educational requirements.

The NWEBU was formed in 1879, but associating did not as yet feature strongly in the life of the churches. It was ten years before Holyhead joined, although in 1877, two years before the NEWBU was founded, Penrallt, Bangor, felt strongly enough to inform the Lancashire association of the rift caused by the termination of W.H. Bishop's ministry. The latter part of the century reveals an emphasis on the establishment of the churches rather than an association. The influence of associating for both the coastal and north eastern churches was to come to the fore in the early twentieth century.

SUMMARY OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

CHAPTER FOUR **THE COASTAL CHURCHES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

Bangor

Penuel Welsh Baptist church

Charles Davies	Minister
David Jones	Minister after J.D. Williams
J.D. Williams	Minister in the mid 1860s

Penrallt English Baptist church

Robert Beck	Church member
Thomas Betts	Coachman at Vaynol Hall and a founding member
W.H. Bishop	The first minister of the church
Mary Jane Cosier	Business woman who initiated the English church in partnership with others
John Owens	Church member
W.O. Roberts	Founding member

Colwyn Bay

Rev. W. Hughes	Founder and Director of the Congo Training Institute First minister of Tabernacl Welsh/English Baptist church
Spinther James	Infuential Baptist minister and historian

Holyhead

William Griffith	Welsh Congregational minister who did much to encourage English services
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Bethel Welsh Baptist church

William Morgan	An influential minister whose encouragement ensured the development of the English Baptist church
Robert Williams	Secretary of Bethel

New Park Street Holyhead

Rev. Crathern	Minister in the late 1880s
Robert Ellis	A deacon
Gomer Evans	Appointed minister in 1894
W.H. Jones	A deacon
Samuel Roberts	Appointed minister in 1888

John Williams

Appointed minister in 1891

Llandudno

Francis Wills

First minister of the English Baptist church

John Raymond

**Second minister of Llandudno English Baptist church and
First secretary of the NWEBU**

CHAPTER FIVE

1900 – 1920

There were three occasions during this period when geographical factors played a crucial part in English Baptist life within North Wales. The first was the decision taken by NWEBU in 1912 to become a constituent part of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association. The second was in 1913 when J.H. Shakespeare, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, wrote in response to a request for funds that churches ‘affiliated to the Welsh Association and the Welsh Union would come under the Welsh scheme for grants.’¹ It is not hard to imagine confusion arising in BUGB, and frustration in Cefn Mawr and Mold as both churches belonged to the NWEBU and the DFM Association of the Welsh Union. The third was the reorganization of Baptist life in the West Midlands in 1915, which led to Chester Street and its daughter church at Bradley Road transferring to the NWEBU from the Shropshire Association. The churches were now well established and language issues did not have a major impact. The NWEBU was consolidating its corporate identity as evidenced by the annual circulation of the president’s letter with a brief administrative summary of the union’s activities. Copies for 1895 and 1907-11 inclusive are preserved in Bangor University Library.² Primarily language issues are confined to references to the Welsh-speaking DFM association and a general acceptance that English and Welsh-speaking churches occupied parallel worlds.

Two examples are highlighted. The NWEBU did not dismiss working with the DFM Association. In October 1920 Haydn Rees suggested it would be wise to seek their cooperation in order ‘to meet the demands which the fast increase of the population of the district is presenting.’³ The committee appointed to oversee the Buckley church was advised to contact the Welsh Association ‘to consider what action to take.’⁴ In April

¹ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

² Bangor University Library, X/EL 537 ENG.

³ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

⁴ Ibid.

1921 the General Committee, meeting in Llandudno, was informed that the DFM had been contacted regarding Buckley, Llay, Mold, Shotton, and Lodge (Brymbo). The meeting believed that ‘events were moving towards a desirable and possible grouping,’⁵ but there was a sense of déjà vu in its assessment that ‘we must not look for any great assistance from the Welsh Association,’⁶ which had proved unreliable in helping Buckley in the late nineteenth century.

The language problem was not always regarded by NWEBU as a reaction to perceptions of unresponsiveness by the Welsh-speaking churches. In 1904 the Welsh-speaking chapel in Pwllheli gave notice it would be applying for both membership and a grant towards holding English services during the summer season.⁷ However at the annual meeting in July the NWEBU secretary was instructed to inform Pwllheli that ‘no Welsh churches were received and given the present state of the funds the union did not feel justified in recommending a grant.’⁸ The reasons for Pwllheli being denied membership are not revealed but Abergele and Llanfairfechan which were both Welsh-speaking churches did belong to the NWEBU at this time.

Of the three principal formative factors associating assumed the greatest importance in this period. The NWEBU records reveal an active life amongst the churches both within North Wales and, from 1912, as a constituent member of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association. From 1911 attention was given to the possibilities of church planting in Deeside. Under the leadership of J.H. Shakespeare, the General Secretary of BUGB from 1898-1924, there was significant corporate and strategic development within the national union which increased opportunities for associating through the Sustentation Fund, the emergence of Area Superintendents and the consideration of denominational matters of national importance.⁹ The consequence of these denominational developments were that

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See P. Shepherd, *The Making of a Modern Denomination: John Howard Shakespeare and the English Baptists, 1898-1924* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001).

for the remainder of the century the London based Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland became the predominant external influence on NWEBU and its constituent churches.

The national background

The first two decades of the twentieth century significant for nonconformity. The Edwardian age is often regarded as its high summer but closer inspection suggests September rather than July when the sun shines brightly but the days shorten, the nights grow cooler and leaves begin to show autumnal tints. 'By 1914 all the main denominations were recording a decline in attendance.'¹⁰ Welsh chapels were showing 26000 less members than at the peak of the 1904 revival.¹¹ A survey undertaken by the *Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald* in Caernarfon during January February and July 1908 revealed that only about 12.5% of a population of 9000 attended church.¹² However an examination of the figures in Table 1 for Baptist churches in the Wrexham area, shows that membership and Sunday school figures were broadly constant between 1904 and 1924.

Decline is attributed to a disparate range of reasons. R. Tudur Jones' lists churches' indifference to the proletariat, the impact of modern science, creeping anglicisation, a growing influence from middle class morality, the effects of higher criticism, the failure of teetotalism and lifeless church services.¹³ At the turn of the twentieth century Wales was not a God-centred society over which dissenting clergy exercised absolute control.¹⁴ By 1900 the possibilities for leisure time proliferated as incomes rose and working hours

¹⁰ K.O. Morgan. 'Aspects of the National Background. Tom Ellis versus Lloyd George.' in G.H.Jenkins, & J.B. Smith, (eds), *Politics and Society in Wales 1840-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), p.134.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid and K.O. Morgan, *The Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.135.

¹³ R. Tudur Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation* Pope, R.(ed.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 5.

¹⁴ T. Williams, 'Language, Religion, and Culture' in T. Herbert, and G.E. Jones, (Eds) *Wales 1880-1914*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), p.80.

decreased. Nonconformity became one voice among many clamouring for the attention of an increasingly selective populace.¹⁵ Densil Morgan's reasons for decline are similar to Tudur Jones' to which he adds a retreat from biblical authority, the lure of a liberal creed, the downplaying of the supernatural in contrast to deifying humankind, plus an inability to formulate an adequate, orthodox and biblically realistic doctrine of society.¹⁶ An earlier Baptist scholar, E.A. Payne, made a descriptive summary with reference to England which is also applicable to Wales. 'The Edwardian period was a brief Indian summer following the rich harvest of the second half of the nineteenth century.'¹⁷

Political factors exerted great influence on nonconformity, as in the nineteenth century, but the waning of the Liberal party created division as nonconformity adjusted to the rise of socialism. In contrast with Ireland the impact of forceful Welsh nationalism seeking some form of separatism and self government was at least a generation away. The secular historian K.O. Morgan wrote that by 1914 Wales had become increasingly bound to the constitution, class system, and capitalism of England.¹⁸ Church historians, Densil Morgan and Robert Pope draw attention to the theological ambiguities of socialism.¹⁹ In Densil Morgan's view Labour's social concern for justice and fair play was compatible with Christian faith, but its materialistic philosophy and humanist preconceptions offered a direct challenge to Christianity's doctrine of fallen human nature. For Robert Pope, the failure of nonconformity to recover its previous status in society was because it had 'eschewed the only path that might have secured success; namely, a spiritually informed commitment to politics.'²⁰ The growing chasm between traditional evangelical theology that human depravity was responsible for conditions in the world, and the socialist view that social improvement would encourage individual regeneration 'split congregations

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ D.D. Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p.40.

¹⁷ E.A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: a short history* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1959) p.169.

Morgan, 'Aspects of the National Background. Tom Ellis versus Lloyd George', p.97.

¹⁹ See Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000*, pp.39-40.

²⁰ R. Pope, *Building Jerusalem: Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales, 1906-1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p.164.

politically and would soon put an end to the Liberal – Nonconformist hegemony.’²¹ By 1918 it was ‘undeniable that Labour had replaced the Liberal party as the most potent and popular political force in Wales.’²² The new political reality enhanced divisions within nonconformity between conservative and liberal theology regarding the nature of humanity and the consequent means of improving the human lot. Nonconformity had erred on the side of piety at the expense of practicality by a general neglect of the temporal needs of its adherents. Recreational activity which lacked a spiritual background was viewed with ‘dire suspicion ...religion did not appear to take into account the needs of the common man in his desire to provide, here and now, a fuller life for himself and his children’²³ without having to wait until the hereafter.

In the surviving annals of both the NWEBU and its constituent churches there are no direct references to theological attitudes relating to the gradual demise of the Liberal party and the rise of Labour. The half yearly meeting of the NWEBU held in Ponciau on 11 December 1905 did accept a proposition that congratulations be sent to Campbell-Bannerman ‘on being asked to form a government,’²⁴ and that the reforms for which the country was yearning ‘be proceeded with.’²⁵ Congratulations were also sent to David Lloyd George on his appointment to the cabinet.²⁶ Otherwise the nearest political comments are to be found in the presidential address of Rev. J.W. Humphreys, minister of Mount Pleasant, Ponciau, which were reproduced in the NWEBU circular letter for 1909. His overall theme was ‘Our Present Duty in the Light of the Apostolic Church,’ in which he reflected a broad evangelicalism that called for a requirement to endure ‘the present religious depression and reaction in the country. Despite the recent revival there has been a loss of hope, a decline in enthusiasm, a weakening of faith, and abounding

²¹ Ibid p.70.

²² Ibid p.72.

²³ Pope, *Building Jerusalem: Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales, 1906-1939*, p.78 quoting W.H. Davies, *The Right Place, the Right Time: memories of boyhood's days in a Welsh mining community* (Llandybie: Llyfrau'r Dryw, 1972), p.67.

²⁴ Ruthin Records Office ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ruthin Records Office ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

coldness in the life of many members of the church.’²⁷ The antidote was found in the ‘simple Puritanical service with its continual theme knowing nothing among you except Christ, and him crucified.’²⁸ Humphreys quoted J.H. Shakespeare’s remark that in every age of revival the church has survived not by surrendering its message but by confronting the world. ‘It must confront human sin and need with the cross; it must confront worldliness with spirituality, it must confront scepticism with the Word of God.’²⁹

Humphreys drew a parallel between contemporary movements and the apostolic church’s confrontation with ‘new movements, fresh religious problems, and knotty questions’³⁰ such as ‘the relationship between the Church and Judaism, the admission of Gentiles, and the relationship between Christian masters and their slaves.’³¹ He referred to the socialist theme of the brotherhood of the human race but asserted ‘it is Christ’s ideas of brotherhood that have enabled men to see old social problems in a new light.’³² It was the teaching of Christ that has made the old conditions seem unjust and intolerable, bringing to light the inequalities and injustices of the present order. ‘Only in the spirit of Jesus can the world’s need be met, and its problems finally solved ...only the fresh vision of the Father’s love, the surrender to the Saviour’s cross and the appropriation of the Spirit’s power will inspire, fit, and equip it for the holy task to which God summons.’³³

The Christian consequence of the brotherhood of man was the need for international arbitration and the settlement of disputes by the acceptance of a third party ‘supposed to be impartial.’³⁴ Humphreys cites the Geneva arbitration in the ‘Alabama Question’ under the Washington Treaty of 1871.³⁵ The United States had claimed compensation from Britain for the depredations of a Confederate warship, ‘The Alabama’, which had been built in England during the Civil War. The dispute also involved access to Canadian

²⁷ Bangor University Library, X/EL 537 ENG N.Wales English Baptist Union Circular letter 1909.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. There is no reference to the source of J.H. Shakespeare’s remark.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

fisheries and the ownership of San Juan Island off British Columbia. Britain agreed to arbitration but although the outcome was deemed to be a poor settlement for Britain and Canada, the treaty came to be regarded as a milestone in international arbitration.

Humphreys developed his theme that the teaching of Christ drives the search for social justice in which it is 'our duty to champion the cause of the downtrodden races.'³⁶ He cited incidents from the Congo where 'defenceless natives' have been 'forced at point of the bayonet to gather rubber to satisfy the greed of the officials,'³⁷ villages burned, innocent men women, and children butchered and regions depopulated. Through the information available from the Baptist Missionary Society Humphreys appeared to be casting his net for examples further afield than contemporary socialism. The moral and spiritual dynamic of the gospel encapsulated in the activity of the apostolic Church should be the compelling motivator. He made a negative comparison with the contemporary scene. The New Testament church was 'a real spiritual home for the people ...a refuge to the distressed, the succourer of the poor, the consoler of the sorrowful, and the champion of every humane sentiment,'³⁸ but he concluded 'how different things are today.'³⁹ His reasons presaged the opinions of Densil Morgan, Robert Pope and others that Welsh Edwardian nonconformity had abrogated fundamentals of faith and practice. 'Some of our churches have ceased to be looked on as a spiritual home to the people ...the masses have been estranged, the poor people are leaving us and the toiling workers are looking to others to fight their battles.'⁴⁰ He does not identify his target but it must be a reasonable assumption nascent socialism was the object of his criticism.

Humphreys' closing comments relate to nationalism in which he based his remarks on 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, 'becoming all things to all men'. He was not seeking political independence but arguing for educational and ecclesiastical recognition for ethnic

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bangor University Library, X/EL 537 ENG North Wales English Baptist Union Circular Letter for 1909.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

reasons. In North Wales 'the inhabitants are exceedingly Welsh in spirit, sympathy and aspirations', consequently 'English and Welsh agree that they should adapt methods to suit the peculiarities of the people.'⁴¹ He cites the Board of Education 'having Elementary, Intermediate and University education develop on purely national lines,'⁴² and uses the same argument about the Church of England within Wales. Religion can not afford to ignore the 'Celtic turn of mind,'⁴³ because 'by the enforcement of English ideals and methods upon the people, the majority of the nation became alienated from the church, and have stood aloof from it ever since.'⁴⁴ By supporting nationalism there can be 'a proper direction,'⁴⁵ which can prevent the church from becoming bigoted and clannish, and help it to 'grow enlightened and cosmopolitan in its sympathies.'⁴⁶ The essence of genuine nationalism is the 'right of a nation to solve its problems in its own way. If Wales had this right, the Anglican Church would have been disestablished many years ago and the Licensing Bill would have been passed without trouble.'⁴⁷ Humphreys concluded his address by returning to contemporary moral realities and gospel priorities to help 'purify the life of the people,'⁴⁸ because despite religious heritage and 'mighty revival that swept through the land a few years ago, untruthfulness, immorality and drunkenness are flourishing in our midst.'⁴⁹

The Revival of 1904

It is not within the remit of this study to examine the 1904 Revival at national level, but to consider the impact of a national phenomenon amongst the English Baptist churches of North Wales. As the statistics and newspapers reports of the time indicated, the revival made an immediate mark in the areas where it exploded into life. Viator Cambrensis was

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.

also right in his assertion that of the thousands who flocked into the chapels, many 'lapsed with equal rapidity.'⁵⁰ His cryptic comment that 'the last state of many churches was worse than the first'⁵¹ is a matter of opinion although, by 1912, the fervour of its halcyon days had evaporated. In his presidential letter to the NWEBU churches in 1909 J.W. Humphreys of Ponciau wrote critically of the decline of moral standards despite the recent revival.⁵² The circular letter for 1910, when Thomas Morgan of Mold was president, refers to a unanimous resolution that 'our urgent need in view of the present depression and reaction prevalent in our midst, is to secure a revival of spiritual religion in our churches on Apostolic and Pentecostal lines, and therefore the most effective method of ensuring this, is to accord the Prayer Meeting its prescribed place in our modern life and thought.'⁵³

Some national aspects of the revival help contextualize the local experience. Eifion Evans, writing from a conservative evangelical stance, interprets it theologically. His argument is based on the hypothesis that it occurred despite nonconformity which had sold its soul to liberal theology and the higher criticism.⁵⁴ Others present the revival in sociological terms. For G.E. Jones a key explanation was that rural migration to industrial conurbations encouraged people to respond to an appeal which offered 'old values in a new environment.'⁵⁵ For T. Williams the revival was dominated by working class youth and women who believed themselves to be excluded from 'a recently professionalized ministry and the diaconate by poverty, education, age, or gender.'⁵⁶ Deidre Beddoe comments on the role of women in the revival. Eight out of ten of the followers of Evan Roberts on his first missionary journey were women. They were not 'besotted groupies as some versions of history frequently depict them. They played a key part in organizing

⁵⁰ Viator Cambrensis *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation* (London: I. Pitman, 1912), p.46

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Bangor University Library, X/EL 537 ENG North Wales English Baptist Union Circular Letter for 1909.

⁵³ Ibid for 1910.

⁵⁴ See E. Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904* (Port Talbot: Evangelical Movement of Wales, 1969).

⁵⁵ T. Herbert and G.E. Jones, (eds.) *Wales 1880-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988) p.4.

⁵⁶ Williams, 'Language, Religion, and Culture', p.82.

meetings and preaching.’⁵⁷ Robert Pope indicates how the socialist leader Arthur Cook initially welcomed the revival, but later considered its emotionalism had diverted attention from the plight of the working man, and offered no solution to the injustice of society.⁵⁸

Some commentators present the revival from a cultural perspective. For D.G. Evans the revival emphasised prayer and the beauty of congregational singing, and because it was largely a young people’s revival that had no formalism in its services there were short addresses rather than long sermons. Interestingly he maintains Evan Roberts had little success in North Wales and that Flintshire and Montgomeryshire remained mostly untouched. As the revival waned and criticism mounted it became viewed as an attempt to reverse the structure of chapel authority, to ignore ministerial guidance and break with tradition. It became ‘an attempt to put the laity and young people in charge of spiritual renaissance’⁵⁹ and as the last of its kind heralded the decline of organized religion in the principality. Eifion Evans suggests that to some extent the appearance of Elim and Apostolic churches was a natural outcome of the revival years. ‘In the experience of some of the converts ...the ecstasy of the new wine was all too soon curbed by the frigidity of the old bottles.’⁶⁰

The Baptist scholar Ernest Payne thought the revival had been of brief duration, and did not spread to other parts of the country where the missions of Torrey and Alexander and Gypsy Smith that were held under the auspices of National Free Church Council had not achieved the results hoped for.⁶¹ In contrast, Ian Randall wrote that part of the national growth in England between 1902-1904 may have been due to the evangelistic campaigns of Torrey and Alexander.⁶² Charles Brown, minister of Ferme Park Baptist church in

⁵⁷ D. Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: a history of women in twentieth-century Wales* (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 2000), p.11.

⁵⁸ Pope, *Building Jerusalem: Nonconformity, Labour and the Social Question in Wales, 1906-1939*, p.95.

⁵⁹ D.G.Evans, *A History of Wales: 1815-1906* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989) pp.239-40.

⁶⁰ E. Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904*, 196.

⁶¹ Payne, *The Baptist Union* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1959), p.173.

⁶² I.M. Randall, *English Baptists of the Twentieth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2005) p.33.

London, did not want Evan Roberts to be brought to England because ‘this would savour too much of the showman.’⁶³ Tom Phillips, by now the minister at Bloomsbury Central Baptist church, made the perceptive comment that the need in England was not the Welsh revival but the spirit that brought it.⁶⁴ He had trained for the ministry at Llangollen Baptist College and cut his pastoral teeth at Mount Pleasant, Ponciau. From his own experience he would have been able to contrast the emotional spontaneity of Welsh revivalism with the more orchestrated evangelism of the Torrey-Alexander variety. An essential element of the revival was its almost spontaneous ignition of fervour and conviction. The stiff upper lip and the ‘hwyl’ did not sit easily together.

Amongst the Baptist churches in North Wales the revival had mixed fortunes. Its impact amongst the Welsh churches was far greater than the English as Table 1 clearly shows. R. Tudur Jones mentions ‘unforgettable meetings at Sion, Ponciau,’⁶⁵ at which the preachers were J.R. Jones of Pontypridd and Thomas Shankland by then minister at the Welsh Baptist church in Rhyl. R.B. Jones of Porth spoke at Penuel, Rhosllanerchrugog. The Revival spread to Salem, Penycae, and Tabernacl, Brymbo where E.K. Jones baptised twenty-two on Christmas day.⁶⁶ The *Wrexham Advertiser* reported that in Rhosllanerchrugog there was ‘an atmosphere of spiritual force’ with ‘remarkable scenes’⁶⁷ but made no specific mention of Baptist churches. The Christmas eve edition referred to the ‘divine presence’ being ‘apparent at all the meetings.’⁶⁸ and specifically mentioned Miss Davies from Leeswood as an evangelist and preacher. No-one in the village is sure who she was, but a lady with a life-long association with the Congregational chapel in Pontybodkyn wonders if she was a sister to the then minister at Cedron.⁶⁹ The chapels mentioned by Tudur Jones and the *Wrexham Advertiser* were all Welsh-speaking.

⁶³ Ibid p. 61 quoting *Baptist Times* 10 February 1905 p.98.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation*, p.289.

⁶⁶ Ibid p.306.

⁶⁷ *Wrexham Advertiser* 3 December 1904.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 24 December 1904.

⁶⁹ Conversation with Lucille Ingman, secretary at Cedron Pontybodkyn.

Wrexham itself was largely by-passed by the revival. Table 1 bears this out for both Welsh and English Baptist churches. G.V. Price wrote ‘it did not appear to have had or have left any marked difference on the church at Chester Street although much interest was taken in it, throughout the Wrexham district.’⁷⁰ Tudur Jones remarked ‘some Wrexham people were downhearted,’⁷¹ adding the wry comment there were those in the town who ‘believed God was angry with Wrexham because Walter Craddock and Morgan Llwyd had been forced to flee the town’⁷² in the seventeenth century.

It would appear the connection between the revival and the English Baptist churches across North Wales was not dissimilar from Wrexham. Commenting on the revival in Cefn Mawr, G.V. Price briefly mentions the revival at Seion where the minister, ‘felt the quickening influence of this extraordinary and social awakening of the people’,⁷³ adding that he took full advantage of a ‘wonderful opportunity for Christian witness’.⁷⁴ Tabernacl ‘became a centre of white heat of emotional excitement,’ as sixty-one members were added to the church roll,⁷⁵ but Price makes no reference to the revival in his chapters on the English chapels at Ebenezer and Bethel.

The tenuous connection between NWEBU churches and the revival can be gleaned from the record of their mission activities, none of which have any direct link with it from the wording of the minutes. Llandudno appointed a Mr. Hunter as an assistant minister. The minute for 24 February 1904 reads ‘that we sanction the taking up of mission work on the Conway shore and appoint Mr. Hunter as Home Mission pastor.’⁷⁶ The NWEBU agreed at their November meeting ‘that W. Hunter of Llandudno who had been pastor of a church in Ireland for some years and been appointed missionary in connection with the

⁷⁰ Price, *The Old Meeting*, p.321.

⁷¹ Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation* p.306.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ G.V. Price, ‘Servants of God; history of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and District’, Unpublished MS Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham (1964), p.154.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.234.

⁷⁶ ‘A History of Zion English Baptist Church, Llandudno’ in *Zion English Baptist Church Year Book 1962-63* Author unknown.

church in Llandudno be recognized as a minister of the union.’⁷⁷

Although the date technically predates the outbreak of revival, the *Wrexham Advertiser* for 22 January 1904 carried an item reporting that in Mold the Baptist church agreed to an extension of the work in the Maesydre area of the town which contained a good number of new residents who were mostly from South Wales and included many Baptists.⁷⁸ The archives of Sussex Street English Baptist church in Rhyl contain a verbatim copy of a sermon delivered on 27 November 1904. The topic was faithfulness. The delivery might have been with fervour but the contents of a standard exegesis of Revelation ch.2 v.10 ‘...be thou faithful unto death...’ and its application contain nothing to suggest the church was experiencing a spiritual revolution from revival. At the half-yearly meeting of the NWEBU in Buckley during February 1905 there were short addresses from N. Jones, and Rev.W. Williams of Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, and two members of Grosvenor Park Baptist Church, Chester, Mr. Gardiner, and a Mr. Hughes. The link with Grosvenor Park is intriguing. There was a connection between Grosvenor Park and Buckley at the end of the nineteenth century, but there is no evidence that the Chester church ever belonged to the NWEBU. Unfortunately there is no surviving summary of the discussions. It would have been fascinating to discover Rev. W. Williams contribution given the bitter disputes taking place in Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.⁷⁹

The last action from the revival period relates to the request for membership of the NWEBU by Bethel, Cefn Mawr, in July 1906.⁸⁰ A decision was deferred for six months whilst a committee enquire into the position and prospects of the mission. At the following meeting in February 1907 it was reported that Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, had withdrawn opposition and Bethel was admitted into membership.⁸¹

Table 1 contains the returns from the BUGB Directories for 1904-5, 1907-9, and 1914

⁷⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.
⁷⁸ *Wrexham Advertiser* 22 January 1904.
⁷⁹ See pp. 225-130.
⁸⁰ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.
⁸¹ Ibid.

for key churches in the Wrexham area where the impact of the revival affecting the English-speaking churches was the greatest. Outside Wrexham the figures clearly show the revival affected the Welsh-speaking churches far more than the English, and also confirm its comparative lack of influence within Wrexham. Cambrensis' accusation that the wealth of spiritual power revealed in the revival was practically non-existent by 1912 can be seen as untrue so far as local Baptist churches were concerned. There are some fluctuations in the figures, and whilst the intensity of fervour may have lessened, the overall numbers for 1914 only show a reduction in adult membership from 1904 at Ebenezer and Tabernacl, Cefn Mawr, and Rhosddu. Sunday school figures show a drastic drop of 48% in Rhosllanerchrugog, 50% in Chester Street and Rhosddu and lesser decreases at Tabernacl, Cefn Mawr, and Penybryn, Wrexham. Sunday school numbers reached 130 at Bethel, Cefn Mawr, which had not begun in 1904. Salem, Penycae, had an increase of 49%.

Statistics, of course, do not reveal everything. If J.W. Humphreys and Thomas Morgan, were right about the waning of the revival as expressed in their presidential addresses to the NWEBU in 1909 and 1910 three questions have to be asked. One is why the churches were not penetrating the citadels of worldliness as effectively. The second, given the membership returns as shown in Table 1 remained consistently high, whether the lack of effectiveness was due not to failures of evangelistic strategy but to the spark having died in pews and pulpit. There were no significant increases in membership, so the third question is whether a decline in attendance was not reflected through revisions of membership.

The First World War

The outbreak of the Great War completely overshadowed the punches and counter punches of political and theological argument. Alan Ruston refers to the war to end all wars as 'the cathartic event of the twentieth century.'⁸² Cherished and well established

⁸² A. Ruston, 'Protestant Nonconformity and World War I', in A.P.F. Sell, and R.A. Cross, *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003) p.241.

nonconformist principles such as voluntarism were ‘swept away by actions of government,’⁸³ leaving the churches to march in a more or less compliant line. He applied the conclusion of the Executive Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association to all the churches. ‘The war overshadows everyone and everything; churches and religious societies find themselves faced by problems of life and death for which there is no ready answer.’⁸⁴ Problems raised by the war fuelled the ongoing decline of nonconformity with doubt and desertion in the hard years of unemployment during the 1920s when many who had returned as heroes found themselves on the industrial and commercial scrap heap. As K.O. Morgan expressed it ‘amongst the conformist pressures of total war the old values lost something of their validity.’⁸⁵ Old enemies like the bishop, the brewer, and the squire seemed less important in the aftermath of destruction and death.

In the months leading up to the war Free Churches advocated peace more than they had during the previous twenty years.⁸⁶ It was a mood reflected in a resolution at the half yearly meeting of the NWEBU at Buckley in 1911 which ‘viewed with alarm the tendency to the vote for armaments,’⁸⁷ and appealed to the government to use all means in its power to advance the cause for peace.⁸⁸ However as the international tension increased, sympathy for the smaller nations fuelled bellicosity in the face of the ‘bullying Hun’. A speech by Lloyd George at the Queen’s Hall in September 1914 referring to ‘little five foot five nations’, implying Belgium, Serbia, and Montenegro, struck a chord in Wales.⁸⁹ In Britain as a whole anti-German xenophobia erupted in the face of propaganda about atrocities, zeppelin raids on the east coast, the sinking of the Lusitania, and the execution of Edith Cavell.⁹⁰ In some circles Christian support for the war was

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ K.O.Morgan, ‘Aspects of the National Background. Tom Ellis versus Lloyd George’, p.179.

⁸⁶ Ruston, ‘Protestant Nonconformity and World War I’, p.243.

⁸⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1, North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ K.O. Morgan, ‘Aspects of the National Background. Tom Ellis versus Lloyd George.’, p.160.

⁹⁰ D.D. Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000*, p.42.

expressed in apocalyptic terms. Alan Ruston cites the change of attitude which was reflected in the *Christian World*:

In the present conflict it is clear we are not fighting against the scientific acumen, the philosophical or theological learning of the German people as such, but against the manifestation of the Anti-Christ which expresses itself in the masterful, imperious, and the power-loving zeitgeist.⁹¹

However the jingoism of pulpit recruitment returned to haunt the preachers and damage church as well as chapel. When it was realized the war would not be over by Christmas, stories of life in the trenches with its horrendous body count, brought people to see 'the incongruity of Christ's followers urging young men to take arms.'⁹²

Evidence from the surviving records of NWEBU and its constituent churches suggests an absence of apocalyptic jingoism. Superficially church life appeared to continue normally as the distant war created little local difficulties. The painful exception was the expressions of condolence to families whose sons became victims. After the war a hint of scepticism could be detected in the appointment of J.A. Jones as a representative from the Llandudno church to a meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties at Llandudno in July 1918,⁹³ a body which had begun life as the National Council Against Conscription. It argued that in a time of war censorship, conscription and the curtailment of legal rights in legislation such as the Defence of the Realm Act was a pretext for curbing the very rights of 'liberty' and 'democracy' that Britain was supposedly fighting to protect. Leonard Coombs and Sam George were appointed as delegates from Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr to a similar meeting in Wrexham. The main topic was a consideration that 'the Australian method of education and training be adopted in English schools as a preparation for military training 'and that children get used to the weapons of blood.'⁹⁴ The church meeting resolved such suggestions be condemned.⁹⁵

Several common factors faced the churches during the war such as the level of ministerial

⁹¹ *Christian World*, 10 Sept. 1914, 2nd editorial p.8.

⁹² D.D. Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000*, p.46.

⁹³ Zion Baptist Church, Llandudno, church meeting minute book 1909-1927.

⁹⁴ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 Church Meeting minutes, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

stipend in relation to the cost of living, the lighting restrictions, the possibility of damage from enemy aircraft, temperance issues, condolences for the bereaved and evangelism.

During June 1915 Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay, discussed the 'serious decline in Sunday collections'⁹⁶ which had continued since the war began. The deficit on the balance had doubled to £96 and 'under these circumstances it was decided to ask the pastor to accept a reduction in salary from 31 December next to £8 per month.'⁹⁷ The minutes do not make a connection, but David Griffiths, a blind minister who hailed from Cefn Mawr, resigned in 1916 to become Free Church chaplain to the National Institute for the Blind. Ironically his successor, Arthur Jones, had his salary increased in 1919 from £100 to £204 as 'a mark of appreciation to his valuable work during his first year, with particular reference to 'powerful and consistent preaching' and the 'wonderful increase in the collections.'⁹⁸ During 1916 Old Colwyn were seeking to maintain financial support for their pastor through the denominational Sustentation Fund. In February the church ascertained it would be required to raise £93-6-8d to sustain a salary of £120p.a.⁹⁹ By December the deacons accepted that if the church paid £98 the Sustentation Fund would augment the salary to £130p.a.¹⁰⁰ After the war Zion, Llandudno, agreed to award their pastor 'a war bonus of £25' in 1918¹⁰¹, and another one of £40 in 1919.¹⁰²

The war had a different effect on ministerial finances in Wrexham and Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr. On 29 October 1916 Chester Street considered a letter from Lewis Morris requesting an advance on his salary because 'in consequence of the prolonged war it had by now, under a fixed salary, become much more difficult to arrange for the general welfare of himself and his family.'¹⁰³ It was agreed at a special church meeting on 5 November to award him an increase of £25p.a. 'for the duration of the war and twelve

⁹⁶ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book..

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Old Colwyn Baptist Church, minute book 1899-1924.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Zion Baptist Church, Llandudno, church meeting minute book 1909-1927.

¹⁰² Zion Baptist Church, Llandudno, finance committee minute book.

¹⁰³ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

months afterwards.¹⁰⁴ Having discussed sending a circular letter from the secretary to all the members to explain the situation the meeting finally decided the increase 'would be a charge on church funds and a circular letter would not be required.'¹⁰⁵

Leonard Coombs had done exactly the same in Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, during 1915 but with a different outcome from the church. He had sought an advance on his salary in July and August. On 9 August the church meeting resolved all the members were to be seen and 'several men and women volunteered to do that.'¹⁰⁶ At the following meeting on 23 August some members promised to increase their contributions but the majority could not promise to do so, but would maintain their regular giving with the promise to do their best for the church. The meeting was unanimous in asking Coombs to continue as at present and if the church improves they would try and do better for him when the finances were in a better state.¹⁰⁷

The lighting restrictions affected several churches. In October 1916 Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay, decided to have Sunday school at 10.00am, the morning service at 11.00am and bring the evening service forward to 3.00pm.¹⁰⁸ The change was unpopular. The decision regarding the evening service was rescinded in November.¹⁰⁹ No reference was made to the time of Sunday school. Old Colwyn were also ambivalent about the restrictions. In mid September they decided to hold their week night service as usual 'but procure blinds for the Sunday school so as to comply with the regulations.'¹¹⁰ They were unable to make a decision about the evening service for a further ten days when the church meeting agreed to keep it at 6.30pm and procure blinds for the church windows.¹¹¹ Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, agreed at their April church meeting in 1916 to use blinds on Sunday evenings and 'if possible shorten the service before dark comes on.'¹¹² In

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 church meeting minutes, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book 1909-1927.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Minute book 1899-1924, Old Colwyn Baptist Church.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

November the church asked the Sunday school to put blinds on their windows ‘to darken lights as ordered by the government in case of air raids.’¹¹³ An ironic consequence of Lewis Morris’ request for an advance on his salary was the deferment of the matter to the following Sunday because of the small attendance at evening meetings as a ‘result of war office lighting restrictions obscuring all the lights in the town streets and chapels at night.’¹¹⁴ An entry in the NWEBU minutes for November 1916 records the evening meeting was held but the brethren started early for home because of ‘local conditions affecting the lights’.¹¹⁵ At the annual meeting the following June it was resolved ‘not to hold any meetings of the association until after the war except in committee.’¹¹⁶

For three of the churches the hitherto unknown threat of warfare by damage from enemy aircraft became a reality for their buildings’ insurance. At the February church meeting in 1916 the treasurer at Llandudno was ‘asked to look into the cost of aircraft insurance.’¹¹⁷ His findings are not recorded. The February church meeting at Chester Street, Wrexham, resolved ‘the church premises should be insured against damage done by aircraft.’¹¹⁸ Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, had a closer experience of aircraft damage when the church meeting on 11, October 1918 considered an appeal from Hartlepool Baptist church for funds ‘to raise a chapel in place of one destroyed by a German raid.’¹¹⁹ The meeting decided to send an advance of ten shillings out of funds. Tom Wright was delegated to collect subscriptions from the members and refund the ten shillings to the treasurer.¹²⁰ Interestingly there is a discrepancy in the records because a parallel minute book records the date as 1915.¹²¹ The raid itself occurred on 10 December 1914 when one hundred and twenty-one local people were killed including the Sunday school secretary and seven of the scholars.¹²²

113 Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

114 Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

115 Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1, North Wales English Baptist Union minute book: 1904-1931

116 Ibid.

117 Zion Baptist church, Llandudno, minute book 1909-1927.

118 Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book,.

119 Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

120 Ibid.

121 Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

122 Personal e-mail from J. Mason, sec of Oxford Road Baptist Church, Hartlepool.

There are several reference to what might broadly be called 'soldiers' relief'. The first was in Wrexham which as a barracks town always had a military presence. In December 1914 the church meeting took responsibility for the 'soldiers' socials'¹²³ which originated amongst the Sunday school teachers. Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, had the most involvement with military welfare. In January 1915 the church received an appeal from the 'National Fund for Welsh Troops' to supply extra comforts, but decided 'to leave it alone at present.'¹²⁴ On 5 June 1916 the church considered a request from Brigadier Owen and others to help establish a fund to assist wounded soldiers and sailors, and agreed to join in when something local was being done.¹²⁵ The parallel minute book adds the appeal 'should be left on the table'¹²⁶ because the church was already connected with a local fund for the same purpose. It was agreed a Sunday morning collection be taken for North Wales and Liverpool hospitals, the Sunday school would be asked to send £1, and 'we solicit subscription funds.'¹²⁷ In January 1917 the church accepted an invitation from Park Hall camp, near Oswestry, to send a concert party.¹²⁸

As ever with nonconformity, temperance was frequently on the agenda. In April 1915 Lewis Morris, the deacons and seventy members of Chester Street, Wrexham, signed a pledge:

I hereby promise to abstain from all intoxicating liquors as beverages for at least the period of the war, and further, to use my influence on the side of sobriety and loyalty so as to help my dear homeland to pass victoriously through her time of stress and sacrifice.¹²⁹

The wording implies not all members were teetotal, and no reference was made to the useage of any money that would be saved. At a church meeting in March 1916 Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, responded to an appeal from the National Free Church Council of Wales by

¹²³ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book,
¹²⁴ Ruthin Records Office ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.
¹²⁵ Ibid.
¹²⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.
¹²⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.
¹²⁸ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.
¹²⁹ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

agreeing to set aside 1 April as a day of intercession and appeal. They also agreed to have a sermon on temperance and passed a resolution demanding the total prohibition of liquor traffic during the war. Copies were to be forwarded to the local MP and the Prime Minister.¹³⁰ The NWEBU regularly passed temperance resolutions. In November 1915 the wording was 'that the Public House Control Board be asked to place the whole of Wales under the regulations proposed for the coastal towns,'¹³¹ and a committee was also established 'to consider the temperance question.'¹³² At the following meeting at Buckley in May 1916 Rev. T. Morgan of Ebenezer, Mold, in his report on 'the temperance work and prospects' commented that 'very little aggressive work had been undertaken in consequence of the lighting restrictions.'¹³³ A further resolution was carried 'expressing satisfaction that the whole of Wales and Monmouthshire had been placed under the control of the Liquor Control Board.'¹³⁴ The November meeting in Llandudno produced a resolution in which the:

NWEBU respectfully urges the government to act at once and prohibit during the war and for six months afterwards the manufacture, importation, and sale of intoxicating liquor as beverages because it is of the opinion that any scheme of state purchase should have in view the extinction of the traffic.¹³⁵

Given the colossal number of war casualties, there are relatively few references in the records to the deaths of church members. The earliest recorded condolences were in December 1914 at the December church meeting in Chester Street, Wrexham, when Rev. Lewis Morris expressed the sympathy of the church to Mr. and Mrs. Haslin on the loss of their son in France.¹³⁶ After the communion service on 3 February 1917 Lewis Morris referred to the 'tragic deaths of Lieutenant John Evans and brother Arthur Jones,'¹³⁷ and spoke of the promising life of Lt. Evans who had died in action in France, and the valuable service rendered to the church by Arthur Jones who died in Seaforth Military

¹³⁰ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 Minute Book Ebenezer Cefn Mawr.

¹³¹ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book: 1904-1931.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Hospital. The meeting expressed 'tender sympathies to the sorrow-stricken Families.'¹³⁸ The only other reference within the records was in 1917 at the October church meeting in Old Colwyn which recorded the death of brother Fred Davies in France, and expressed deepest sympathy to his widow and mother.¹³⁹ It is a reasonable assumption there would have been many more fatal casualties from the churches which are unrecorded because expressions of sympathy and support would have been made within the services rather than the formally recorded church meetings.

The final noteworthy common factor was a concern with mission which mainly appeared towards the end of the war. A negative note was expressed in January 1916 in the report to the Chester Street church meeting about the work in Bradley Road. It deplored the fact a great number of young men attending Bradley Road, and especially the Sunday school, had enlisted in the army 'which would increase the duties of the faithful workers.'¹⁴⁰ There is no indication that the remark signified anything more than regret at the depletion of menfolk, rather than any reluctance to fight. A similar comment was made two years later that 'the war had taken away a great number of the younger men consequently there was a decrease in attendance.'¹⁴¹ Positive moves were made at the general committee meeting of NWEBU in Rhyl during June 1917. Two committees were formed, Northern and Southern, to consider what steps could be taken to receive men back from the front and how to use them 'in winning others.'¹⁴² The Northern committee comprised Rev. H. Edwards (Rhyl), Rev. John Raymond (Llandudno and secretary of NWEBU), and Mr. W. Jones (Colwyn Bay). These three were to choose a fourth member. The Southern Committee comprised Rev. Leonard Coombs (Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr), Rev. W.B. Jones (Ponciau) and Mr. Morrison of Chester Street, Wrexham. These three were also to choose a fourth member.¹⁴³ The nomenclature of the two committees reflects an attempt to deal with the geographical spread of the NWEBU, as did the later division of the coastal and

138

Ibid.

139

Old Colwyn Baptist Church, minute book 1899-1924.

140

Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

141

Ibid.

142

Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

143

Ibid.

inland area churches from the 1940s.

Penrallt, Bangor, agreed to change the time of the morning service 'to suit the soldiers at present in Bangor.'¹⁴⁴ At a church meeting in January 1919 Chester Street resolved that the pastor write to welcome church and Sunday school members 'as they are discharged and come amongst us again into civil life.'¹⁴⁵ Old Colwyn took a more imaginative approach. Their church meeting in January 1919 resolved that now the war was 'happily over we should work and endeavour to make our services more effective,'¹⁴⁶ by 'introducing anthems to make the musical part of services more attractive, having more social life possibly on a monthly basis, and forming a Christian Endeavour or young peoples' guild.'¹⁴⁷ However to do this successfully would require 'better convenience for making tea easily and quickly.'¹⁴⁸ Llandudno 'arranged to have a meeting to welcome home our boys' on 31 May 1919.'¹⁴⁹ Rhyl received a large number of soldiers, mainly from South Wales, through the establishment of the nearby Kinmel army camp. It would appear the soldiers helped the church more than the church helped the soldiers who 'did much to revive the work by taking an interest in the church and the Sunday school.'¹⁵⁰ Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, arranged a conference between pastor, deacons and Sunday school teachers on 31 January 1917 to see what could be done to improve church life, and also to 'bring in the outsider.'¹⁵¹ Sadly there is no record of the outcome.

Peter Shepherd has written how as a consequence of the work of military chaplains 'contacts were built that inspired a greater ecumenical spirit.'¹⁵² The two leading Free Churchmen on the Interdenominational Advisory Committee, established by the government in 1916, were J.H. Shakespeare from the Baptist Union and the Wesleyan

¹⁴⁴ Penrallt Baptist Church, Bangor, minute book.

¹⁴⁵ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book,

¹⁴⁶ Old Colwyn Baptist Church, minute book 1899-1924,

¹⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁹ Zion Baptist Church, Llandudno, minute book 1909-1927

¹⁵⁰ Papers held at Sussex Street Baptist Church, Rhyl

¹⁵¹ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr

¹⁵² Shepherd, *The Making of a Modern Denomination: John Howard Shakespeare and the English Baptists, 1898-1924*, p.98.

J.H. Bateson who were 'its pillars.'¹⁵³ The only ecumenical reference in the archives of the North Wales churches relating to the war concerns Wesleyan and Baptist contact in Old Colwyn in October 1918 when the English Wesleyans invited the Baptists 'to combine Sunday services to save fuel.'¹⁵⁴ The invitation was declined because their 'heating apparatus has to be in constant use for the infants school'¹⁵⁵ so no savings would be made. It has to be wondered how much of the Baptist reply was an excuse and whether the Wesleyans could have been invited to worship with the Baptists.

Sociological aspects of Baptist life

Ecclesiological and theological issues encased in social and cultural guises were part of the ongoing argument between nonconformity and the established church. They featured strongly with the publication in 1912 of *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation* written under the pseudonym of Viator Cambrensis. Its perspective is Anglican containing more polemic than objective analysis. Nonetheless, if allowances are made for its biased prejudice, as a bench-mark of contemporary criticism of nonconformity it is not too far removed from the more reflective analysis of later historians. The author is extremely critical of the nonconformist diaconate whose power can ruin a ministry. As mentioned earlier with reference to Holyhead,¹⁵⁶ one man can 'force a good man to resign, while the deacon himself is seated on his throne like a Czar.'¹⁵⁷ There is an uncomplimentary contrast with the *sedd fawr*, or deacons' pew, of thirty to fifty years ago as many current deacons are accused of serious difficulty in 'ideas, experience, and spirituality,'¹⁵⁸ and their 'obstinacy is commensurate with their ignorance.'¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Ibid, quoting P. Thompson, 'The Free Church Army Chaplain 1830-1930' (University of Sheffield PhD thesis, 1990), pp367-8.

¹⁵⁴ Old Colwyn Baptist Church, minute book 1899-1924.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ See Chapter 4 with reference to Holyhead, pp. 176-184.

¹⁵⁷ Viator Cambrensis, *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation*, p.15.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid p.16.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

There is no evidence during these two decades within the NWEBU churches of the high-handedness of deacons such as that displayed in Holyhead or by the male members of Penrallt during the 1870s, except for Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr. Their minute books reveal the church was rife with fraught relationships. Some were between families, and others between members and deacons. Ebenezer included several strong personalities whose concern for their personal integrity was intertwined with a suspicion of the motives of others as they jockeyed for power and influence.

There were three occasions when personality clashes appeared to get the better of the church. The first erupted at the January church meeting in 1899 when George Morris asked to be allowed to withdraw as treasurer of the building fund. As money already collected in the Sunday school was now to be kept by the Sunday school treasurer he had been informed he was not wanted. I.W. Jones 'spoke at length about the course of action that had been taken.'¹⁶⁰ George Morris responded to what seemed to be a family argument between the Morrises and the Joneses because at the February church meeting I.W. Jones resigned as a deacon 'owing to remarks made by George Morris at the last meeting.'¹⁶¹ Two other members then 'entered into the question of the grievance between the two families.'¹⁶² It was proposed that Morris disclose the names of those who did not want him as treasurer and the meeting was adjourned until 13 February. When it reconvened, because Morris refused to reveal names, it was proposed he should resign as a deacon. The meeting was again adjourned for a few days when his resignation as a trustee was accepted, but the arguments continued at the March church meeting when he refused to resign from the diaconate. One member declared because he 'was so obstinate in not doing as the church wished he should cease to be a deacon, seeing the upset it caused in the church.'¹⁶³ It was then proposed he 'be excluded from the office of deacon' and the two officers who had resigned take office again.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

The ill-feeling persisted for four years, erupting again at the November church meeting in 1903. The church was also rife with other disputes at this time. Edward Jones took the chair to allow William Williams, the pastor, to air his grievance that there was not sufficient room for him and George Morris. He 'felt all through his ministry he was some-what hindered in his work'¹⁶⁵ by Morris, consequently the church must make a choice. If Morris remained a member he would resign. A proposition was made for the church to expel George Morris and retain the minister. An amendment that 'brother Morris be retained as a member'¹⁶⁶ was lost, but the voting figures were not recorded. In a later dispute some spoke about expelling George Morris without a cause, and others said that he was a 'wedge in the way for some time.'¹⁶⁷ One member said if the choices were between two evils then choose the lesser. Another believed whilst it was hard work to expel brother Morris there were grounds to do so. Mrs. Humphreys had the temerity to comment he 'should have been present to speak for himself.'¹⁶⁸ The minister had the final word saying he 'would have no objection to giving Mr. Morris a letter to go to any other church.'¹⁶⁹

The second personality clash occurred in 1904. It escalated from a remark apparently made by a student from Bangor Baptist College that William Williams was inconsistent. In the pulpit he seemed to be saying that 'passive resistors who were in the minority were right in their actions,'¹⁷⁰ yet in the church meeting those with a minority view 'should fall in with the other side.'¹⁷¹ George Clark and John Griffiths visited Hywel Jones at the request of the church meeting held on 2 May to enquire whether or not he had called the minister a liar. Reporting back to a further church meeting on 6 May it seemed Hywel Jones was only repeating 'what I.W. Jones had told him the college student had said'.¹⁷²

165 Ibid.
 166 Ibid.
 167 Ibid.
 168 Ibid.
 169 Ibid.
 170 Ibid.
 171 Ibid.
 172 Ibid.

I.W. Jones denied having made such a remark ‘and considered it a lie concocted by Hywel Jones to try and estrange him and the pastor’¹⁷³ as there was good feeling between them. Ben Williams wanted to know if during the interview Hywel Jones and all those who took a differing view were to be regarded as rebels. The question was ‘not whether the pastor was untruthful but who had first circulated the statement about him.’¹⁷⁴ William Williams suggested there was a ‘great disparity’¹⁷⁵ between Griffiths and Clark’s statement and that of Hywel Jones. He believed it to be ‘a deep-seated hatred and malice towards him and would challenge any student to come forward and say he was a liar.’¹⁷⁶ He had every confidence in Clark and Griffiths’ report and believed Hywel Jones had a motive for his remarks. Suggestions were made that Hywel Jones ‘be suspended for two months’,¹⁷⁷ and that he be asked not to take communion until the affair was settled. The matter was left on the table until ‘Rev. Williams or someone else’¹⁷⁸ called another meeting. The minute books give no indication as to when and how the matter was resolved as the church became embroiled in the third dispute that led to the formation of a breakaway church.

The third personality clash began in 1903 when there were ‘grievances in connection with the praise and the musical arrangements in the services.’¹⁷⁹ The recriminations persisted during the revival in 1904 and to the withdrawal of thirty-two members who established Bethel not as a church plant during the unique time of witness and mission in the revival, but as a rival fellowship. The bitterness never entirely disappeared. A lifelong member from Ebenezer commented that Ebenezer members thought the Bethel members never agreed on anything and that ‘there wasn’t a Christian amongst them.’¹⁸⁰

The Ebenezer minute book presents a blow by blow account of the dispute which began

173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid
179 Ibid, p.360.
180 Interview with Eleanor Bowen on 7 August 2007.

with simmering resentment between Mrs. Jones, the precentor, and Miss Richards, the organist. Technically the trouble started before the revival but its fervour of repentance failed to make any difference. It erupted at the church meeting of 9 November 1903 which was specially called to 'consider a grievance between organist and precentor.'¹⁸¹ Mrs. Jones complained that her position was not recognized because she was 'at present not allowed to choose her own tunes.'¹⁸² The organist understood the selection of tunes was her responsibility which she had always done without complaint. A proposition was lost by eight votes that the hymns be chosen by the pastor and the tunes by the precentor to be then submitted to the organist. A further proposition, carried by fourteen votes, was that given the feeling of the meeting no vote should be taken that night. Two further propositions ensued. The first being that the matter be left for a committee to settle. The second that it be formed by the officers with power to add to their number if so desired. The committee met at the close of the church meeting with the result that 'both sisters agreed to work together and meet each other to select the tunes'.¹⁸³ Miss Richards promised to visit Mrs. Jones on the Friday night following.

However at the deacons' meeting on 17 November it was moved that a special church meeting be called for the following evening 'to deal with the business that officers failed to do at the last church meeting,'¹⁸⁴ and effect a settlement. Clearly the meeting at Mrs. Jones' house had not been amicable. The organist submitted a letter of resignation to the special church meeting which was accepted. It was again proposed, and carried, that the pastor choose the hymns, and the precentor the tunes to be submitted to the organist. The proposition to appoint Joseph Daniels of Cefnbychan as organist was lost by seven votes, and a proposition to keep the harmonium closed until after the next church meeting was carried by fourteen votes. A further dispute erupted in the meeting when John Griffiths brought a complaint against 'Brother Richards'. It is not clear whether he was related to Miss Richards, but given the close-knit relationships in village life it is a reasonable

¹⁸¹ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

assumption. A proposition was brought, and carried by 32 votes, that the two men meet the officers but it must become a church matter unless brother Richards apologised and withdrew his remark that John Griffiths was 'not fit to be a member.'¹⁸⁵ This was the same church meeting that considered the grievance between the pastor and George Morris to which reference has already been made. The dispute between Richards and Griffiths carried over to the December church meeting.

There is some disparity about when the exodus from Ebenezer occurred. According to G.V. Price the breakaway members first met in temporary accommodation at Ashfield House in Rhosymedre but very soon afterwards successfully applied to the education authority for the use of a classroom in Cefn council school. Services began on 18 December 1903 with W.H. Jones officiating.¹⁸⁶ Shortly afterwards he was accepted by Cardiff Baptist College and had his first pastorate at Ystrad in Glamorganshire. Nine months later the *Wrexham Advertiser* carried a brief item on 24 September 1904 referring to the opening services. 'A mission has been formed by the English Baptists.'¹⁸⁷ The services were held in the boys' department at the county school, Cefn. The morning meeting was a prayer meeting under the presidency of Edward Jones a former deacon at Ebenezer. 'There was a fair attendance.'¹⁸⁸ Fifty attended the Sunday School. The collection was 14/-. In the afternoon the sermon was preached by W.H. Jones of Cefn when the congregation numbered about one hundred and fifty.¹⁸⁹ At Ebenezer the June church meeting agreed 'that all he resignations lie on the table.'¹⁹⁰ The October church meeting voted 'that the names of all those who have identified themselves with the new mission be taken off the books.'¹⁹¹

Perhaps an indication of some of the attitudes within Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, is that there are no references to conversions, requests for baptism and church membership. The only

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Price, 'Servants of God; history of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and district', p.375.

¹⁸⁷ *Wrexham Advertiser* 24 September 1904.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

direct reference to the revival is for the church meeting on 18 April 1905 at which it was agreed that 'Mrs. Hall have an extra 5/- for cleaning during the revival'¹⁹² on account of the extra meetings. Another indication of difficult attitudes within the church became evident in the proposition that a strong letter be sent 'to Bolton church condemning their action in not answering their request for a transfer letter.'¹⁹³ However at the May church meeting the request from Mrs. Kyffin for a letter of transfer to the new mission church at Bethel was held over until the June meeting when it was agreed that 'it be left on the table.'¹⁹⁴

A key feature of early twentieth century nonconformity was its sabbatarianism. Viator Cambrensis was scathing. Nonconformity and the sabbatarians 'failed to distinguish between the Jewish Sabbath and the Lord's Day.'¹⁹⁵ The Reformers, based on the fourth commandment, set the Sabbath as a day of rest and the descendants of the puritans are 'seeking to rivet this sophism upon the people.'¹⁹⁶ He highlighted nonconformist attempts to influence postal deliveries and tram timetables and asks where the line of demarcation between the secular and the strictly religious is to be drawn and .who is to draw it?'¹⁹⁷ Consistency required potatoes to be peeled before Sunday, ministers to travel to preaching engagements on Saturdays, and if the rules were to be 'relaxed so as to permit good works'¹⁹⁸ on whose authority was the decision taken? Over fifty years later K.O. Morgan would have agreed with Cambrensis regarding 'the sombre aspects of Sabbatarian Puritanism'¹⁹⁹ which, at worst, 'helped generate tensions, frustrations, and fantasies, feelings of subconscious guilt and sexual deprivation.'²⁰⁰ Morgan, in contrast, also reflected a positive social contribution in recognizing nonconformity had been responsible, within its limitations, 'for almost every significant and worthwhile aspect of

191 Ibid.

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid.

195 Viator Cambrensis, *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation*, p.38.

196 Ibid, p.40.

197 Ibid.

198 Ibid, p.41.

199 K.O. Morgan, 'Aspects of the National Background. Tom Ellis versus Lloyd George', p.17.

social and cultural activity in late nineteenth century Wales,²⁰¹ thus creating a ‘legacy for modern Wales.’²⁰² Part of Callum Brown’s definition of sabbatarianism includes how men, ‘even those prompted by muscular Christianity,’²⁰³ were trained to see their masculine tendencies must be curbed on the Sabbath. ‘Sunday was feminised and mens’ games were rendered immoral and criminal.’²⁰⁴ Two specific incidents of negative sabbatarianism from North East Wales would have provided ammunition for Cambrensis. At a church meeting in Chester Street, Wrexham, in 1913, a letter was read from the Free Church Council containing a resolution that ‘pantomime practice on Sundays’²⁰⁵ should not occur, and was duly approved. Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, agreed at the church meeting on 9 May 1914, to ‘sign a petition against the running of motor buses on a Sunday.’²⁰⁶

In social life two influences ran counter to each other simultaneously in the growth of the chapels and their ‘impious alternatives.’²⁰⁷ The temperance movement, as ever, was in the foreground of nonconformity’s engagement with society, as evidenced during the Great War. The difficulty was that however much nonconformity preached total abstinence it ‘could not prevent Tory magistrates from granting licences to public houses,’²⁰⁸ nor could it prohibit middle class adherents ‘from taking aperitifs in the privacy of their houses.’²⁰⁹ Attempts to control the minds of chapel members were undermined by the independency of the self same members.

The archives indicate temperance issues were never major agenda items in the English Baptist churches of North Wales but the frequency with which they appeared in NWEBU resolutions indicates they were never far from members’ minds. In February 1904 it was

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid p.18.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ C.G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain; understanding secularism 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.139.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

²⁰⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

²⁰⁷ Williams, ‘Language, Religion, and Culture’ in Herbert, T. & Jones, G.E, *Wales 1880-1914*, p.81.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

unanimously agreed that the Union ‘deprecated the interference of parliament’²¹⁰ in the process of licensing of public houses by the magistrates. In December 1908 a resolution condemned the action of the House of Lords in rejecting the Licensing Bill.²¹¹ At the annual general meeting in 1913 it was resolved to write to the Prime Minister ‘asking that the long delayed bill on temperance be introduced.’²¹² Then came the war years and the resolutions already mentioned. In 1920 Rev. Arthur Jones from Colwyn Bay spoke at the annual meetings of the NWEBU on ‘the evils in society threatening the Church’²¹³ and referred specifically to intemperance and Sabbath desecration. In October there was a resolution at the half yearly meetings ‘calling on the government to grant facilities for the passing of the Welsh Temperance Bill.’²¹⁴

Amongst the churches, it was in Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, where temperance appeared most regularly on the agenda. At several church meetings various members’ names were put forward to be removed from the books. Given the vituperative nature of some of the meetings with, from the tone of the minutes, an apparent lack of pastoral sensitivity, such occasions seemed the Baptist equivalent of a kangaroo court. On 17 September 1900 the church meeting resolved John Williams ‘be expelled from church membership for succumbing to the influence of drink ...until he seek his place as a backslider.’²¹⁵ In 1905 at an undated church meeting in September it was reported George Griffiths had been ‘seen intoxicated.’²¹⁶ It was proposed he be suspended from the Lord’s Supper for one month and ‘afterwards take his place as usual.’²¹⁷ It has to be asked whether he was treated differently from John Williams because it was only reported he had been seen intoxicated. The minutes give no indication whether the church investigated the facts or whether George Griffiths was present to speak up for himself. The church meeting on 3 December 1907 agreed ‘William Griffith’s name be removed for drunkenness.’²¹⁸ On

²¹⁰ Ruthin Records, Office ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

this occasion no timescale was recorded.

Baptists and education

Education continued to be a central issue for nonconformity. On a national basis there was concern in Welsh-speaking quarters about the decline of the Welsh language through the growth in the use of English as education adjusted to the implications of the 1902 Education Act. In 1901 it was recorded that 84% of the population was able to speak English, and the conclusion is inescapable that 'English was not a foreign language to most of the Welsh,'²¹⁹ so Williams infers in the light of that figure it was difficult to view educational developments as a 'linguistic murder machine.'²²⁰ Williams also believed immigration 'rather than schooling'²²¹ brought about the greatest linguistic change. He refers to an increasing number of intellectuals, politicians and civil servants who were 'committed to evolving a new consensus of the value of Welsh,'²²² adding 'the Welsh chose English, the language of an empire, certainly, but the language also of emerging democracy.'²²³ He commented, controversially, that 'the attitude of the Welsh seems to have been indifferent to the fate of the language although the evidence for this has sometimes been suppressed.'²²⁴

The key factor in the Conservative government's Education Act of 1902 was the abolition of over 2500 school boards and the establishment of local education authorities (LEAs) under the purview of the county councils. Denominational schools became absorbed into the state system and were funded from taxation. As the great majority of church schools were Anglican, nonconformists argued that they would have to pay for a religious education which they believed was false. There was stiff resistance in England, especially from nonconformity. John Clifford, the influential minister of Westbourne Park Baptist church, London, formed the National Passive Resistance Movement which refused to pay

²¹⁹ Williams, 'Language, Religion, and Culture', p.74.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid, p.78.

²²² Ibid, p.79.

²²³ Ibid.

education rates because they infringed freedom of conscience. The movement claimed the state had gone beyond its role and 'entered the sacred realms of conscience thus rendering resistance justifiable'.²²⁵ There was a different reaction in Wales. Eleven of the Welsh county councils expressed their intention not to implement the act. Lloyd George on the other hand argued for total self government in educational matters and to that end the LEAs should implement the act for denominational schools as soon as possible provided no teachers were tested for their religious beliefs and the financial aspects were under public control. Lloyd George believed the 1902 Education Act Wales provided the greatest political opportunity to ensure national unity, but 'despite warm talk of agreement there was never any hope it would succeed.'²²⁶

Alderman Simon Jones of Chester Street Wrexham was the pivotal figure in matters of education among the churches of the NWEBU. From 1892 until 1907 he was chairman of the Science and Art school in Wrexham. In 1903 he was involved in the instigation of the Wrexham branch of the Passive Resistance Movement, thus giving a national influence local expression. On 8 May 1905 along with forty-seven other people including the mayor of Wrexham, four aldermen, borough councilors and magistrates he was summoned for nonpayment of 10/8d which was the educational part of the rates.²²⁷ He explained his reasons in a letter presented to the court:

Dear Mr. Heywood,

I hand you the sum of £2-13-4d to pay the poor, county and other rates as set forth in the Demand Note. I leave 10-8d the amount of the sectarian rate (at 4d in the £), for you to recover by the usual process. I regret very much to give you this trouble, but I am bound to make my protest against the unjust Education Act, 1902, until it has been amended so as to give full control over the schools to representatives of all the public, and the power of appointment of all teachers irrespective of religious creeds.

Yours truly

Simon Jones²²⁸

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ G.V. Price, 'Alderman Simon Jones J.P.' Unpublished MS (c.1960), Chester Street Baptist Church, p.88.

²²⁶ Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation: Wales 1890-1914*, p.279.

²²⁷ Price, 'Alderman Simon Jones J.P.', p.90.

²²⁸ Ibid, p.91.

The chair of the bench commented on 'the very nice manner in which Mr. Jones had refused to pay.'²²⁹ An order was made for the seizure of goods to be sold at public auction which was a silver trowel. Councillor William Thomas bid 17/3d, the amount required under the warrant.²³⁰

On 23 May 1905 the Passive Resistance Movement held a meeting in the old British School. John Clifford was present and declared that the Movement was based on justice, truth, and the word of God and as such 'although men might scorn, it was bound to succeed.'²³¹ Simon Jones also addressed the meeting declaring he was making an appeal to public opinion 'which ultimately ruled the country.'²³² He expected support for those who maintained the old principle that 'the laws of the country should not favour one sect more than another in their public schools, but all should have equal opportunities.'²³³ He refuted the charge that those who had refused to pay the rate were law-breakers. He stood the argument on its head accusing 'the church state clergy'²³⁴ of being the law breakers:

They did not break the law in refusing to pay willingly the sectarian proportion of the education rate; they rather chose the law of distraint instead which had been provided for the purpose, and by this action they condemned the Education Act. They deliberately preferred the bailiffs to enter their houses and seize their goods rather than consent to the ministers or priests of any denomination entering the common schools to instill their dogmas into the tender minds of the young.²³⁵

Simon Jones did not favour mixed schools. In an address to a meeting of the Wrexham Education Committee in November 1907 he hoped 'the fad of mixed schools would not be pushed too far.'²³⁶ Characteristic of his age he believed boys should specialize in the direction of 'the profession or specialised industries of the district.'²³⁷ Girls 'should specialise in the direction of domestic work.'²³⁸ So he was glad the committee had

229 Ibid.
230 Ibid, p.92.
231 Ibid, p.93.
232 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid, p.64.
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid.

provided workshops for the boys and ‘facilities for teaching laundry work and cooking’²³⁹ to the girls. ‘The retrograde step of mixing schools should be taken on very slowly.’²⁴⁰ Jones spoke at the opening of the new junior school in Penycae as a member of the education committee. It was a district where nonconformists were in the majority. Jones commented that ‘the erection of such commodious schools was an absolute necessity, believing that it answered their expectations structurally.’²⁴¹ He also commented on ‘the anachronism and anomaly’ of it being a church school and asked ‘why at public expense should the minds and consciences of little children belonging to nonconformists be subjected to the teaching of the Church of England principles and in several instances of the church catechism.’²⁴² Although called religious instruction it was in effect sectarian instruction. Children should be taught without sectarian bias and choose their denominational affiliation when they reach the age of discretion. ‘A religion on those lines he believed to be a real one and not a forced one.’²⁴³

E.T. Davies, minister of Old Colwyn and NWEBU president in 1907, addressed educational matters in his presidential letter. For Davies physical and intellectual development were paralleled by moral development but when religious teaching was considered ‘some people try to prove its orphanage by making it a sort of nobody’s child.’²⁴⁴ On the one hand there is ‘the Church of Rome and the children of her daughter the ritualists of the Church of England.’²⁴⁵ They seek to teach ‘Roman Catholicism strong, or diluted by Anglicanism and that the state is to pay for it.’²⁴⁶ On the other hand there are the Free Churchmen, ‘including Baptists, the freest from sacerdotalism’, who ‘insist that if the state pays for religious teaching at all, it must be non-sectarian in its character.’²⁴⁷ The churches would be shirking in their duty if they ‘neglect the education

239 Ibid.

240 Ibid.

241 Ibid.

242 Ibid, p.65.

243 Ibid.

244 Bangor University Library, X/EL 537 ENG NWEBU Circular Letter for 1907.

245 Ibid.

246 Ibid.

247 Ibid.

of the rising generation.’²⁴⁸ So based on the fact that the 1870 Education Act ‘means Sunday schools do not have to teach children to read,’²⁴⁹ his solution was to pursue an all round programme of teaching the Bible and the principles of religion through the work of the Sunday schools, on the grounds that ‘for the past hundred years the Sunday schools have chiefly supplied the churches with their pastors, the foreign fields with missionaries, and of late years its Christian women workers have gone forth to labour in Zenanas and schools.’²⁵⁰

Andrew Bradstock’s interpretation of nonconformity and the 1902 Education Act is a contemporary endorsement of the position adopted by Simon Jones and E.T. Davies. He argues that nonconformists thought the most controversial aspect of the act was the eligibility of the denominational schools for rate aid. Given that 80% of voluntary schools were Anglican the move was regarded as ‘putting the church on the rates,’²⁵¹ as part of a Tory plot ‘to establish publicly-funded schools outside of public control.’²⁵² The objective for nonconformist opposition was a ‘sincere desire to roll back Anglican hegemony.’²⁵³ Tithe payment was replaced by rate payment for the teaching of false doctrines and the proselytising of nonconformist children. Part of the difficulty facing nonconformity was its comparative decline in the face of an Anglican renaissance that appeared to be driven by the High Church party, which David Bebbington called ‘an army of young clergymen ...zealous for the advance of the National Church.’²⁵⁴ In Bebbington’s view because another generation had to be educated within the faith, church schools must not be compromised by godless state authorities. If subscriptions were insufficient the state must subsidise them.²⁵⁵ In the eyes of ‘popular Protestantism’ the ‘proposed legislation amounted to nothing less than Rome on the rates,’²⁵⁶ the very point

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁰ Ibid, January 2008, p.345.

²⁵¹ A. Bradstock, ‘Keeping Faith in Politics? Baptists and the 1906 Election’, in *Baptist Quarterly*, 42 (2008), p.345.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ D. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics 1870-1914* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1982), p.134.

²⁵⁵ Ibid p.135.

²⁵⁶ Bradstock, ‘Keeping Faith in Politics? Baptists and the 1906 Election’, p.345.

made by E.T. Davies.

Baptists and Anglicanism

The campaign for disestablishment was the principal political objective of many nonconformists. 'For more than two generations the bitter controversy between church and chapel had been the most consuming matter in Welsh politics.'²⁵⁷ It was frequently to the fore amongst the English Baptist churches of North Wales, but the Disestablishment Act of 1914 eventually arrived not with a bang but a whimper. In Densil Morgan's assessment 'only the most intransigent nonconformists viewed it as an unambiguous victory.'²⁵⁸ Disestablishment had become 'an anachronism, if not an irrelevance.'²⁵⁹ The world had moved on. Material interests, and through the rise of socialism, class loyalties had displaced religious commitment and denominational concerns. Above all, 'ecclesiastical warfare was felt to be inappropriate in the face of social ill, economic necessities and the Great War.'²⁶⁰

In 1912 Viator Cambrensis contributed to the debate with critically pertinent comments. He recognised the unsympathetic attitudes of bishop, squire, and the 'ecclesiastical leaders of the hour,'²⁶¹ had fertilized the growth of dissent. Nonetheless he was aggrieved that whilst the policy of dissent might have been 'the present antithesis of the Established Church, its doctrines were the teachings of the Church.'²⁶² Whatever the ills of the past 'the Church has been improving over a good many years.'²⁶³ His proof list included the increased numbers of confirmations, churches built, baptisms, marriages, ordinations and financial contributions.²⁶⁴ Anglicanism was on the rise. Reflecting on

²⁵⁷ D.D. Morgan, 'Twentieth Century Historians of Welsh Nonconformity' in A.P.F Sell & A.R. Cross (Eds), *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), p.79.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Viator Cambrensis, *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation*, p.5.

²⁶² Ibid, p.8.

²⁶³ Ibid, p.9.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

this situation nearly ninety years later, Densil Morgan endorses the point. In his view the renewal of Anglicanism was attributable to a new breed of reforming bishops with committed pastoral leadership, new and zealous parish priests becoming more the norm than the exception, and the influence of the Oxford Movement as 'a coherent religious system integrating doctrine, liturgy, and rigorous discipleship.'²⁶⁵ In 1891 Gladstone had indicated both the Oxford Movement and the evangelical wing of the Established Church were involved in its renaissance.²⁶⁶

D.T.W. Price provides figures for the St. Asaph diocese between 1891 and 1911. £44,448 had been spent on church buildings and extensions in Colwyn Bay, whilst £97,385 had been spent on schools, churches, and church work in the parish of Wrexham. Easter communicants in the diocese had more than doubled between 1890 and 1912, rising from 14214 to 31069.²⁶⁷

Viator Cambrensis presented a sustained and damning critique of nonconformity, which although it could not be called a defence against disestablishment, did reflect the antagonism between Anglicanism and nonconformity. He thought that by 1912 the wealth of spiritual power revealed in the revival of 1904 was practically nonexistent. Nonconformity had a hypocritical façade. 'The most potent forces that inhere in the genius of nonconformity are centrifugal.'²⁶⁸ Sects and schisms within the sects abound, 'each sect coming into the circle with those views of truth ...that fit its own apprehension ...helping each others consciences by maintaining a kind of conventional agreement, and each sect proudly Christian on the grounds of its disagreement with the other.'²⁶⁹ The bitter rivalry between denominations was a point emphasised by R. Tudur Jones.²⁷⁰ For Cambrensis the most distinctive qualities of nonconformity were superficial. His list included 'volubility, demagogism, wild emotion, physical excitement and evanescent

²⁶⁵ D.D. Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000*, pp 26-30.

²⁶⁶ Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation*, p.6.

²⁶⁷ D.T.W. Price, *A History of the Church in Wales in the Twentieth Century* (Penarth: Church in Wales Publications 1990), p.4.

²⁶⁸ Viator Cambrensis, *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation*, p.21

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

fervour.²⁷¹ The ambition of Welsh nonconformity was amoral. It 'consorts with anything and everything that is likely to restore the power it has lost,'²⁷² and will 'subscribe to any shibboleth that is going, in order to curry favour with those who are pulling the political strings.'²⁷³

He cited the lethal mix of liberal theology and socialism, which, ironically modern historians link with the decline of nonconformity. It stood accused of consorting with Socinianism, preaching 'God as a Father which denies his kingship.'²⁷⁴ God was reduced to a smiling God who has turned his back on wrath, and 'sin is spoken in the same bated breath as hell.'²⁷⁵ Sin is now comparable to a physical disease 'due to an unfavourable environment.'²⁷⁶ The working man must have 'better housing, more libraries, gymnasiums ...and a thousand other things.'²⁷⁷ Such preachers are 'afraid to confront the social injustice of poor wages, and the vices of those in the congregations.'²⁷⁸ Classic nonconformity had abdicated its prophetic role to the revivalist with 'passionate pleading to repent in the face of God's holiness and his 'awful wrath against incorrigible wrongdoers.'²⁷⁹ It was the revivalist who was doing what the pulpit failed to do and give the right view of sin 'which consists not merely in the act, but in the underlying state from which the act proceeds.'²⁸⁰ The apparent diminution of sin was a point noted by R. Tudur Jones, 'generally the pulpit reneged on its responsibility to keep daily before Welsh eyes the gravity of sin and contented itself with general principles now and then. There were definite signs of crisis in the pulpit.'²⁸¹

The diatribe against nonconformity continued with references to statistical manipulation.

²⁷⁰ Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation*, p.44.

²⁷¹ Viator Cambrensis *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation*, p.23.

²⁷² Ibid, p.27.

²⁷³ Ibid, p.26.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, p.27.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

Cambrensis questions whether nonconformity had brought a heritage that transformed the nation by producing figures released by Dr. Llewellyn Williams, the County Medical Officer for Health in Denbighshire. They revealed 187 illegitimate births in a year, including thirteen in Colwyn Bay, eighteen in Denbigh, eight in Llanrwst, eleven in Ruthin, and seventy-seven in Wrexham. He applied the sting of a seasoned polemicist, quoting the typical nonconformist claim that 'here is Wales, a pure orderly and crimeless country. We have made it what it is.'²⁸² In the light of sexual impropriety in the local sphere and the willful manipulation of statistics the 'Nonconformist Conscience' was a contradiction. 'Nonconformist ministers have not deemed it beneath their dignity ...to slide falsehoods off their tongues with such an easy grace, as to wonder whether they really know the difference between truth and falsehood.'²⁸³ According to T. Williams reliable and objective statistics for 1880-1914 are difficult to obtain, because the denominations did inflate the figures.²⁸⁴ Although blind to his own Anglican prejudice, Cambrensis had many accurate points. Densil Morgan's realistic reflection on the outcome of the movement for disestablishment was 'what had been in the 1860s a crusade for righteousness degenerated into a mean-spirited and unedifying imbroglio.'²⁸⁵ The moral argument for disestablishment had become replaced by 'economic considerations of disendowment.'²⁸⁶

Between 1905 and 1913 the NWEBU passed nine resolutions calling for disestablishment. In February 1905 disestablishment was linked with educational concerns. The resolution urged leaders of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons to press forward the question of disestablishment 'as the only satisfactory way of dealing with trouble arising from denominational teaching in elementary schools.'²⁸⁷ At the December meeting the resolution specifically called for disendowment as well as

²⁸¹ Jones, *Faith the Crisis of a Nation* p.160.

²⁸² Cambrensis *The Rise and Decline of Welsh Nonconformity: an impartial investigation*, p.69.

²⁸³ Ibid p.70.

²⁸⁴ T. Williams, 'Language, Religion, and Culture', p.79.

²⁸⁵ D.D. Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000*, p.33.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ruthin Records Office. ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book: 1904-1931.

disestablishment.²⁸⁸ In February 1907 the resolution expressed the hope that the ‘disestablishment of the Anglican Church be undertaken forthwith,’²⁸⁹ but two years later, in January 1909, frustration crept into the wording of the resolution which ‘noted with regret the continued postponement of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Anglican Church in Wales.’²⁹⁰ At their church meeting on 20 February 1911 Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, agreed to send 2/6d to the disestablishment campaign.²⁹¹ The annual general meeting of NWEBU in May 1912 was the first time the union had been convened as a district within the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.²⁹² The President’s theme was disestablishment. The minutes record it was ‘a very able and dignified address,’²⁹³ but the details of the delegates’ report are not given. After 1913 there is no record of any resolution on disestablishment. Neither is there any archival comment on the passing of the Act in 1914.

Associating: 1900-20

The NWEBU developed an active association life within its membership, and from 1912 as a district within the Lancashire and Cheshire Association (L&C). Its active associating with BUGB, particularly in matters relating to sustentation, became indirect after 1912 when its grant recommendations had to be directed to London via the association as indicated by the following extracts from the agreement between NWEBU and the L&C:

Under the new regime the relationship heretofore existing between the North Wales Union and London ceases.

Applications for aid shall be sent to the General Superintendent of the area, and referred by him to the District.

They shall be considered by the District Committee and the recommendation of the District shall be examined and dealt with as in all other Districts of the area, by the General Committee.

Should any difference of opinion arise on any recommendation of the District and

288 Ibid.

289 Ibid.

290 Ibid.

291 Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr

292 For details relating to joining the Lancs. and Ches. Assoc. see pp. 250-52.

293 Ibid.

the judgment of the General Committee, no decision shall be arrived at until a consultation has taken place between the General Superintendent and the District Secretary.²⁹⁴

The extent of associating within the NWEBU is confirmed by there being more references to mission strategies in the NWEBU records than in those of the constituent churches. As a separate union in its own right prior to 1912 it processed the grant applications to be forwarded to the BUGB. At the 1904 annual general meeting the following grants were recommended to the BUGB:

Abergele £15 an increase of £5 on the previous year
Buckley and Nantmawr £20 double the previous year
Ponkey (Ponciau) £20
Old Colwyn £20
Groes (Penycae) £15
Holyhead mission £5
Mold Mission had no new application.²⁹⁵

Three of the recommendations need an explanatory comment. Abergele, which has always been a Welsh-speaking church belonged to the NWEBU in the early years of the union. There is no record of the town having had an English Baptist church. Holyhead mission was a branch Sunday School in Baker Street which started in 1900. The Mold Mission refers to the work in Maesydre although the tin tabernacle was not erected until 1926.

The NWEBU had frequently to remind the churches to forward their contributions for mission. The treasurer's letter of 1905 referred to the need for churches to adhere to rule 5 of the Union otherwise 'we should soon be bankrupt and grants for aided churches could not be given.'²⁹⁶ The plea was repeated in 1907. 'The Treasurer desires to call the urgent attention of the churches to rule 5 of the Union which reads as follows:

Home Missions – Churches shall retain one-third of the money raised by them towards Foreign Missions, and for Home Missions, and shall duly hand the same

²⁹⁴ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

to the Treasurer of the Union .

The failure of several of the churches in past years to observe this rule has considerably hampered the usefulness of the Union in its efforts to meet the wants of the weaker churches, and prevents them from securing the grants they so much require.²⁹⁷

After the merger with the Lancashire and Cheshire Association this role became the responsibility of the Area Superintendent.

The NWEBU involved itself in church-planting, and in seeking to group some of the smaller churches for the provision of pastoral oversight. The principal area considered was Deeside. The half yearly meeting in Ponciau in December 1905 was attended by Rev. W. Williams of the Welsh Association which creates some ambiguity. The minutes do not clarify whether he was representing the Welsh Union or the DFM association, nor whether he was Rev. W. Williams of Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, which had dual membership with the DFM at this time. He urged the Union to develop work at Connah's Quay.²⁹⁸ It was resolved that Messrs. Hutton and Whitton make enquiries and report to the next meeting. The annual meeting at Old Colwyn in July 1906 decided Revs. Humphreys of Ponciau and Thomas Morgan of Mold visit Connah's Quay. Thomas Morgan reported in February 1907 at the following NWEBU meeting in Nant Mawr, Buckley, that the prospect of a work beginning in Connah's Quay was 'very promising.'²⁹⁹ There were already sixteen people who could be 'invited to form a church if suitable premises could be secured.'³⁰⁰ Thomas Morgan was asked to do his best to start a work in Connah's Quay and the NWEBU secretary would write to J.H. Shakespeare, the BUGB secretary, to 'see if any pecuniary help can be obtained.'³⁰¹

Six months later the annual meeting was held for the first time at Bethel, Cefn Mawr. No suitable premises had been found in Connah's Quay and J.H. Shakespeare had replied

²⁹⁷ Bangor University Library, X/EL 537 ENG NWEBU Circular Letter for 1907

²⁹⁸ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

regretting that funding was not available. Six years later, in 1913, Shakespeare responded to a further request for funds that churches 'affiliated to the Welsh Association and the Welsh Union would come under the Welsh scheme for grants.'³⁰² The NWEBU set up a committee to consider how to deal with the matter. This was not the last time the BUGB became confused by the English churches within North Wales,³⁰³ but the problem appears to have been one based more on geography than on language. Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, were not particularly happy with the DFM but the feeling was mutual. Rev. O.M. Owen of Liverpool had written to the church complaining about their 'indifference'³⁰⁴ to the Association rules. His comment led to a proposition that 'Ebenezer withdraw,'³⁰⁵ but the decision was that the matter be 'left on the table for another time.'³⁰⁶

At the annual meeting at Bangor in January 1908 Thomas Morgan reported a Welsh language church had been formed in Connah's Quay which had become affiliated to the DFM. Consequently Connah's Quay disappeared from the agenda, but Deeside remained as a possible area of expansion. The half-yearly meeting at Buckley in 1911 appointed a committee to consider what could be done to establish new causes. It comprised Rev. J. Humphreys of Ponciau, W.B. Jones of Holyhead, and Thomas Morgan of Mold. In December 1912 Rev. T. Roberts of Buckley reported on the 'prospect of work beginning at Shotton,'³⁰⁷ which remained on the agenda for several six-monthly meetings. In June 1913 it was reported that 'only work of a preliminary kind had been attempted'³⁰⁸, and that a 'list of those willing to form an English church be ascertained.'³⁰⁹ To that end Thomas Morgan of Mold and Rev. Hargreaves of Chester were added to the visiting committee connected with the attempt to begin a work in Shotton. Whilst there is evidence here of a further link with Chester, there is no record of Grosvenor Park Chester ever formally belonging to NWEBU. In May 1914 Thomas Morgan reported that there was 'no

302 Ibid.

303 Other examples are considered later.

304 Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

305 Ibid.

306 Ibid.

307 Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

308 Ibid.

309 Ibid.

prospect of starting an English work at Shotton at present.’³¹⁰ In November 1915 it was resolved that Rev. T. Morgan (Mold), and Mr. Griffiths (Buckley) enquire as to ‘what can be done in originating an English cause’³¹¹ in Shotton and work with the general superintendent of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association in the matter. By May 1916, the annual general meeting in Buckley having heard the report on Shotton decided ‘the question was one that demanded further enquiry whether Shotton or Queensferry should be the centre of operation.’³¹² By the time of the meeting at Llandudno in November 1916, Hector Thomas the Lancashire and Cheshire Association Area Superintendent, reported on the work that had begun at Queensferry. ‘The meeting heard with great thankfulness of the promising prospect of this work.’³¹³ Mr. Moses Roberts of 60 Ash Grove, Shotton, who was not listed as a church representative, said he ‘would be glad to hear of any person in the district who would be likely to join them.’³¹⁴

The concern about establishing an English work in Shotton or Queensferry is intriguing as there are no surviving archives. Bethel Shotton dates its beginning from 1908, but until 1931 it was a Welsh-speaking church affiliated to the DFM. Its decision to become an English-speaking church³¹⁵ was because of the presence of English-speaking Baptists in the area. It is possible an English Baptist community had been established as a consequence of the NWEBU’s efforts but which had no building of its own, and possibly indicates a failure of communication between the NWEBU and the DFM.

From the records, Thomas Morgan of Mold had an enthusiasm for evangelism. At the annual general meetings at Ponciau in January 1909 the union expressed a willingness to conduct missions among the churches ‘at the initiative of the individual churches.’³¹⁶ Despite their frequent stormy internal relationships, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, responded. Their church meeting on 4 October accepted the NWEBU suggestion and it was arranged

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Shotton Baptist Church, chapel minutes, 1 November 1931,

for Thomas Morgan to hold mission services from 20 to 24 November.³¹⁷ Unfortunately there are no records of how the mission fared.

Thomas Morgan became NWEBU president in 1910. The theme of his presidential address was 'The Mission of the Baptists' which was a 'carefully prepared paper expressing strong convictions.'³¹⁸ Thanking him for his address, Rev. John Raymond the NWEBU secretary commented 'we do not necessarily as a union endorse all that was stated in the paper, especially with regard to open communion.'³¹⁹ In his correspondence with Penrallt, Bangor, in 1917 when responding to their invitation to the pastorate, Morgan described himself as 'a closed communion Baptist.'³²⁰ The annual meeting of 1910 also received the pastors' reports of churches which had held missions. Sadly the details have not survived. The meeting was agreed they be continued with 'larger preparation being given for the arrangements.'³²¹

In his presidential address, Thomas Morgan might have been responding to the wider issues in the contemporary ideas for the formation of a United Free Church of England. He gave his address on 6 July, 1910. The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference had been held from 13-24 June where, amongst the welter of topics, the concept of a federal free church was mooted. Morgan does admit early in his address he is responding to the call from the National Federation of Free Churches.³²² The General Secretary of BUGB, J. H. Shakespeare, had been considering a wider union of churches for some three years,³²³ so the concept of a broader federation with Baptist participation was certainly in the denominational domain. He suggested the way forward was through a federation of denominations rather than by one sect (Shakespeare's word) being absorbed into another. In Morgan's opinion there was nothing to fear from such a development 'provided it

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Ibid.

317

Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

318

Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

319

Ibid.

320

Penrallt Baptist Church, Bangor, minute book.

321

Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book. 1904-1931

322

Bangor University Library, X/EL 537 ENG North Wales English Baptist Union Circular Letter 1910.

323

Randall, *English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.94.

preserves the whole gospel....and the effectiveness of New Testament ordinances.’³²⁴ However, ‘a united Free Church of England established on compromise is an undesirable society.’³²⁵ Whilst there were those ‘who make the assertion and plead for a closer union,’³²⁶ he asks ‘why should it be expected of us to give up what we conceive to be a plain ordinance of scripture, commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ, while they cling tenaciously to what can not be shown to be scriptural.’³²⁷ He then launched a strong defence of believer’s baptism from the Great Commission and the practice and theology of the New Testament asserting that ‘sprinkling is not baptism.’³²⁸

As the NWEBU sought to develop Baptist work on Deeside, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, was investigating possibilities in Chirk. At their October church meeting in 1913 it was proposed that James Hughes of Chirk be written to about the new cause and invited to meet the committee,³²⁹ which suggests it was already in existence. However there are no clues in the records as to its origins. Leonard Coombs, the minister at Ebenezer, visited Chirk and found nineteen families ‘interested in forming a church.’³³⁰ A mission was proposed for a week commencing on 17 November for which a thousand handbills and five hundred hymn sheets taken from Sankey’s were prepared.³³¹ What appeared to be a promising start stalled in the first half of 1914. At the NWEBU annual general meeting at Bangor in May, Coombs enigmatically reported that ‘owing to certain pressures by someone in authority’³³² the matter was deferred for the time being. The minutes of Ebenezer and the NWEBU do not identify the authority figure, and given the nature of Baptist ecclesiology it is an extraordinary phrase. It is doubtful whether the pressure would have come from the Lancashire and Cheshire Association to which the NWEBU was now affiliated. Speculation on the grounds of poor relationships might suggest the

³²⁴ Bangor University Library, X/EL 537 ENG North Wales English Baptist Union Circular Letter 1910.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

DFM Association but the source of this un-Baptist pressure remains a mystery.

A different aspect of the sense of mission within NWEBU, in keeping with the Baptist tradition of mutual commitment and interdependence within associating, is found in the attempts to support churches where things had gone awry. There are two clear examples in this period.

In November 1916 at the half-yearly meeting in Llandudno John Raymond, the NWEBU secretary, reported on what had been done in 'trying to formulate a scheme for the better conduct of church meetings'³³³ at Rhyl. The minutes for the corresponding church meetings at Rhyl have been lost, but a short history of the church records there was no minister at this time adding 'the membership dwindled and conditions were most discouraging.'³³⁴ Rev. J. McKeracher of Old Colwyn was suggested as chair of the church meeting, and it was also suggested that a committee comprising Hector Thomas, the Lancashire and Cheshire Association Secretary, and Revs. McKeracher and Coombs be appointed to work with those who had been appointed from within the church meeting 'to help the work and work towards a more satisfactory condition.'³³⁵

At the General Committee meeting in Rhyl during May 1918 the opinion was expressed that Buckley and Shotton 'be united in work but the Mold Mission and Brymbo be left alone at present.'³³⁶ The following year Mr. Eatough and Rev. Raymond made a request to the general committee that they visit Buckley and 'endeavour to straighten out what seemed awry there.'³³⁷ In his report to the union's annual meeting at Rhyl in May 1920 Eatough concluded that 'only with grouping with another church and placing a good man in charge was there much hope of anything being done.'³³⁸ A further committee was formed comprising Revs. Morris (Wrexham), Coombs (Cefn Mawr), W.B. Jones (Holyhead) and Mr. Morrison (a deacon at Wrexham) to make enquires 'respecting the N.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ *Brief historical outline*, Sussex Street Baptist Church, Rhyl.. No author given.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

Wales (Cory) Home Mission Fund and its relationship with Buckley.’³³⁹ The meeting was informed of an application from the Salvation Army asking if they could use the chapel ‘if it was true the Baptists were giving up services there.’³⁴⁰ At the October meeting in Colwyn Bay Lewis Morris reported things at Buckley were ‘very much improved and the outlook was cheerful’.³⁴¹ Haydn Rees, minister at Ebenezer, Mold, was added to the oversight committee.

The most important decision made by the NWEBU was the vote, taken in May 1912, to become a constituent district of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association. Until then it had been a small but self-contained English-speaking union. The BUW associations in North Wales were all Welsh-speaking, although a minority of NWEBU churches were also members of the DFM Association. The English-speaking associations in South Wales were, both culturally and geographically distant, and at that time any sense of wholeness within the principality was not in the NWEBU ethos. However the initiative to join the Lancashire and Cheshire Association appears to have originated with the English association rather than the NWEBU. At the half yearly meeting at Llandudno in March 1912 John Raymond reported on meetings in Chester between the officials of NWEBU and the Lancashire and Cheshire Association which were held at the latter’s request.³⁴² The meeting was an example of the NWEBU, the local body, responding to an initiative from a regional body. A resolution was brought by John Raymond and David Griffiths, minister at Colwyn Bay, to the effect:

that this half yearly assembly of NWEBU welcomes the idea of affiliation with the Lancashire and Cheshire Association and urges the churches to make application for admission on the forms sent to each church with the approval of this meeting.’³⁴³

The constituent churches discussed the issue during the summer. Llandudno agreed to

339 Ibid.

340 Ibid.

341 Ibid.

342 Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

343 Ibid.

affiliate on 3 April.³⁴⁴ However the minutes of the Colwyn Bay church clearly indicate the issue was on their agenda prior to John Raymond's report to the March meeting of the NWEBU. The matter was given 'considerable discussion'³⁴⁵ on 3 January having previously been discussed by the deacons and three members on 2 October 1911.³⁴⁶ It is possible the church had prior knowledge through David Griffith's contacts with John Raymond. On the other hand Penrallt, Bangor, have no record of any discussion. Their first reference is for 31 October 1912 when the church received money from the North Wales District of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association.³⁴⁷

When the NWEBU decided to affiliate, at the annual general meeting in Ponciau, all the churches except Rhyl expressed their willingness to join. The resolution was 'that we hereby constitute ourselves a district of the Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association and request that association to recognise us as such at their committee meetings in June.'³⁴⁸ Despite Rhyl's reluctance the decision was recorded as unanimous, and the hope expressed that Rhyl would join after giving the matter more consideration. Their application for membership was accepted at the half yearly meeting at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, on 17 December 1913. The *North Wales Weekly News* for 31 May contained a brief report on the decision with the closing line that 'it remains to be seen whether the solitary church which abstained from accepting amalgamation will fall in with the majority in due course, or seek affiliation with the Welsh Baptist Association.'³⁴⁹ The NWEBU minutes do not indicate whether that had been an option.

An early but undated copy of the NWEBU rules states 'This Union shall be called the North Wales District of the L.&C.B.A.'³⁵⁰ (The Lancashire and Cheshire Association). The objects of the union are 'to establish churches where needed. To undertake evangelical work. To consolidate and stimulate existing churches and to form a link of

³⁴⁴ Zion Baptist Church, Llandudno, minute book.

³⁴⁵ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book, 1909-1927.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Penrallt Baptist Church, Bangor, minute book.

³⁴⁸ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931.

³⁴⁹ *North Wales Weekly News*, 31 May 1912.

brotherhood between churches and individuals whose aim is the extension of the Kingdom of God.’³⁵¹

Chester Street Wrexham, with its daughter church at Bradley Road, did not join NWEBU until 1915. Because of the historical links between Chester Street and Shrewsbury dating from the eighteenth century it had been in membership with the Shropshire Association. The possibility of a change of affiliation began to be mooted at the church meeting on 6 July 1915 when the church considered a request from the Shropshire Association asking whether Chester Street would consider the association merging with the West Midlands Association,³⁵² as a major reorganisation was being undertaken by the smaller associations of the area. The matter was referred to the diaconate, then at the church meeting on 27 July the members ‘thought it advantageous to be associated with the West Midland Association.’³⁵³ There must, however, have been prior contact indicating otherwise as the Shropshire Association had written to Chester Street on 27 July stating how the news given at their meeting in Wellington ‘had a depressing effect on the Association ...we appreciate your association with us highly’³⁵⁴ adding ‘we are loth to accede and ask your members to reconsider. We are not in a position to offer inducement to remain and earnestly desire confirmation of your fellowship.’³⁵⁵ Following their September church meeting Chester Street wrote to the Shropshire Association approving their amalgamation with the West Midlands but adding ‘we as a church should become associated with the North Wales section of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association.’³⁵⁶ Final confirmation of transfer came in October in a letter from Chester Street informing Shropshire the last church meeting ‘re-discussed the matter which has been given careful consideration on several occasions.’³⁵⁷ Acceptance of the transfer to the NWEBU was received on 11 October saying ‘as you left us no loop-hole we had no alternative and

³⁵⁰ NWEBU archives: undated early copy of NWEBU rules.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

therefore by resolution granted a letter of transfer'³⁵⁸ with a sincere expression of regret. Chester Street were formally received into NWEBU at the half yearly meeting at Lodge (Brymbo) on 15 November.

Although the details within the archives are somewhat sparse, consideration should be given to the salary levels within the NWEBU churches, and the relationship with the developing concept of the Sustentation Fund within BUGB. J.H. Shakespeare wrote an editorial for the *Baptist Times* in 1902 with a view to influencing the BUGB Council to do something to help support ministry financially in the smaller churches which he described as 'often depressed and driven to despair.'³⁵⁹ Ian Randall has detailed the controversial development of the Sustentation Fund from concept to pilot scheme,³⁶⁰ with its inevitable link to the accreditation scheme for Baptist ministers that was forged through strong debate during the same period.³⁶¹ The full details of the proposed Ministerial Settlement and Sustentation Scheme were first given in the *Baptist Times*.³⁶² The guaranteed stipends would range from £100 - £120 p.a. for a single minister and £120 - £150 p.a. for a married man. The BUGB eventually adopted the scheme at the spring assembly in 1912.³⁶³ A logical development of the settlement side of the scheme was the division of the country into districts 'under the charge of a general superintendent.'³⁶⁴ A consequence of this decision was that Hector Thomas the secretary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association also became the general superintendent of the area . None of the records give the reason for the association seeking to absorb NWEBU, but it would be a logical assumption that the possible development of the proposed scheme lay behind the merger. Hector Thomas gave a 'full and enlightening statement on

357

Ibid.

358

Ibid.

359

Randall, *English Baptists of the Twentieth Century* p.28, Quoting *Baptist Times* 17 January 1902, pp 46-47.

360

Ibid pp.27-28.

361

Ibid pp.64-72.

362

Ibid p.72, Quoting *Baptist Times* 8 April 1910.

363

Ibid p.73.

364

Ibid p.90 quoting D.C. Sparkes, *The Home Mission Story* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1995), p.58, citing minutes of a meeting of 18 November 1914.

the Sustentation Fund'³⁶⁵ at the NWEBU meeting in Old Colwyn on 19 May 1915.

The scheme was not unanimously endorsed by the NWEBU churches. Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, had voted against the proposal at a special church meeting in April 1912.³⁶⁶ This was the same meeting at which the church also voted for affiliation with the Lancashire and Cheshire Association. The two matters are not directly connected in the way that the minutes are written, but their juxtaposition in the same meeting adds weight to the idea that the NWEBU joining the Lancashire and Cheshire Association had some connection with the proposed sustentation scheme. Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, were reluctant to participate until the 1920s. The church did invite Hector Thomas to speak on the scheme in 1915, and the decision provided their first positive reference to Bethel who were to be invited as well.³⁶⁷

The records do not provide a detailed analysis of stipends in the NWEBU Churches. The following table presents such information as can be gleaned.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Church</u>	<u>Salary</u>
1903	Holyhead	£104
1903	Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr	£108
1904	Old Colwyn	£62
1907	Holyhead	£94 (different minister)
1909	Colwyn Bay	£100
1909	Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr	£104 (different minister)
1910	Colwyn Bay	£120
1911	Colwyn Bay	£132
1915	Colwyn Bay	£96 (reduction due to war)
1917	Colwyn Bay	£96 (different minister)
1917	Bangor	£140 + £26 from the fund
1918	Colwyn Bay	£100
1919	Colwyn Bay	£204

The Old Colwyn archives provide insight into an aspect of associating behind the scenes through the work of John Raymond the NWEBU secretary. Following Rev. Nankevill's

³⁶⁵ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1931

³⁶⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

departure, Old Colwyn was in the process of calling E.T. Davies from the Welsh chapel in Water Street, Rhyl. John Raymond wrote to Old Colwyn on 22 December 1900 having in mind the forthcoming NWEBU half yearly meeting at Sussex Street, Rhyl on 15 January, saying 'It would be advantageous if you could settle things before then.'³⁶⁸ He had found ministers in Rhyl who gave good testimony as to E.T. Davies' 'character and suitability.'³⁶⁹ J.H. Shakespeare also favoured his coming. So 'if the church was favourably disposed'³⁷⁰ he was sure there would be no difficulty in securing an NWEBU decision for recommending a support grant. He felt sure there would be 'no anxiety in the matter of finance'³⁷¹ as he thought Rev. Davies would be prepared to take up the work 'for what the church could raise all doing their best' and 'what he might hope to get from the Home Mission Fund later on.'³⁷² As Mr. Davies was to preach for them on the first Sunday in January he added 'could you not come to some decision as a church then or before?'³⁷³

Some of the churches were in touch with the Irish Baptist Union during this period. Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, had frequently contributed to their annual appeal from the end of the nineteenth century. The Wrexham church meeting in December 1910 responded to the annual appeal from the Irish union and sent 20/-.³⁷⁴ The appeal letter from the Irish Baptist Home Mission was reproduced on the front page of the *Irish Baptist Magazine*.³⁷⁵ Addressed 'to our subscribers and collectors in the churches,'³⁷⁶ it reminds them the financial year closes on 31 December and 'we would be glad if all subscriptions were sent in before that date.'³⁷⁷ As might be expected, reference is made to Roman Catholicism, but not with the critical negativism frequently associated with Orange Protestantism. The six counties witnessed undercurrents of anger throughout the negotiations surrounding

³⁶⁸ Old Colwyn Baptist Church archives.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

³⁷⁵ *The Irish Baptist Magazine* Vol.xxxiv., No.12 December 1910, p.1.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

home rule but the militant confrontation that accompanied the signing of the Ulster Covenant and Edward Carson's threat that Protestants would take up arms if the government allowed home rule for the whole of Ireland did not occur until 1912. It is interesting to note the editorial emphasis that 'the one motive above all other which should induce every Baptist in Ireland to take a copy monthly is loyalty'.³⁷⁸ The letter of appeal indicates 'our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen are more and more open to hear the glad tidings of a free and full salvation, and during the year several of them have publicly testified to their acceptance of Christ by passing through the waters of baptism in obedience to Him.'³⁷⁹ In October 1911 Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, agreed to 'send a collection to the Irish Mission before the end of the year'.³⁸⁰ In 1916 their April church meeting agreed to accept a visit from the Irish Mission deputation 'and give 10/- from church funds.'³⁸¹ The church must have felt favourably disposed to the deputation as the alternative set of minutes adds 'that he should be received on his own terms.'³⁸²

Chester Street, Wrexham, also contributed what could be interpreted as a politically slanted donation. A letter from the secretary of the Independent Labour Party in Wrexham was read to the church meeting in November 1913 requesting a donation on behalf of the Dublin strike fund. Industrial action had begun in August when William Martin Murphy forbade employees of his Tramways Company to be members of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. The strike escalated into lockouts, riots and deaths becoming a catalytic period for the development of the trade union movement in Ireland. The church agreed to have a retiring collection on 17 December.³⁸³ How much was donated is not recorded.

378 Ibid.

379 Ibid.

380 Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

381 Ibid.

382 Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

383 Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

Individual churches

Some minor sociological aspects of church life in this period deserve comment. One concerns the use of individual communion cups instead of the common cup. Ian Randall suggests the use of single cups began with the Congregationalists in the 1890s.³⁸⁴ He quotes from the *Baptist Times* which suggested people were avoiding communion services because they were unhappy with the common cup.³⁸⁵ Some considered the use of non-alcoholic wine in the common cup to be unhygienic and by 1904 unfermented wine was used in most Baptist churches. 'Linked with the temperance issue ...was the late Victorian concern for hygiene.'³⁸⁶ Holyhead opted for individual cups at their annual general meeting in March 1906, but a special church meeting in May rescinded the decision deciding 'that we revert to the old style for the present.'³⁸⁷ Their records give no indication whether the thinking behind either decision was related to temperance or hygiene. It is possible the decision to revert to the common cup might suggest a reluctance to change.

Chester Street, Wrexham, considered using individual cups for health reasons at their church meeting in November 1912. The church had received letters from both the county and borough medical officers of health regarding the use of individual communion cups. The deacons recommended complying with the officers' suggestion. Their letters have not survived, but the report of the Public Health and Housing Committee of Denbighshire County Council reported that the Local Government Board urged on local authorities the great importance of making full use of their powers preventing overcrowding, and 'the removal of any condition tending to injure the health of persons residing in their districts.'³⁸⁸ That report reflected the general public fear of tuberculosis. The decision to change to individual cups was made in the January church meeting of 1913. At the May meeting the church agreed that the deacons' wives 'with the assistance of the senior girls'

³⁸⁴ Randall, *English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.57.

³⁸⁵ Ibid quoting *Baptist Times* 1901 p.552.

³⁸⁶ Ibid p.57f .

³⁸⁷ Llangefni Records Office, WM/75/4 New Park Street Baptist Church, Holyhead, church meeting Minutes.

³⁸⁸ Ruthin Records Office, CD/2/22 Report of the Public Health and Housing Committee of

classes act as a committee to take charge of the individual cups after service,' a revealing glimpse into contemporary attitudes.

Another sociological aspect of church life was the provision of 'hearing apparatus,'³⁸⁹ at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, and Chester Street, Wrexham. The first instance occurred in 1902 at the October church meeting of Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, when it was proposed that a collection be made for Charlotte Roberts and W.H. Jones was delegated to 'produce a hearing horn.'³⁹⁰ At their church meeting on 5 February 1912 it was agreed that Sam George be allowed to sit in the sedd fawr 'because of defective hearing.'³⁹¹ The minutes do not record whether a hearing horn was procured for Charlotte Roberts, nor why it was not suggested that an aid be acquired for Sam George. At the April church meeting in 1918 Chester Street agreed that 'Messrs. Morrison and Jones be appointed to collect all information regarding hearing apparatus.'³⁹² Whatever they discovered came to nothing. The July church meeting decided the church was 'not in a position to take hearing apparatus forward.'³⁹³ No reason was given.

Whether it was from spiritual concern or an Edwardian sense of respectability, Llandudno were anxious to implement the Pauline injunction for everything to be done decently and in order in their standard of worship. In January 1904 the church decided the collection must be taken before not after the sermon. In August 1911 a question was raised about the time the choir entered the service and the organist's 'apparent lack of interest.'³⁹⁴ A resolution was accepted that the organist should do all in his power to increase the numbers in the choir and 'attend early enough to play a voluntary or two before the service.'³⁹⁵ The minister was to attend the first choir practice 'and use his influence to improve matters.'³⁹⁶ In July the following year the church, now with a new organist,

Denbighshire County Council, 10 May 1912.

³⁸⁹ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

³⁹⁰ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4, minute book, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book,.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Zion Baptist Church, Llandudno, minute book, 1911-192.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

decided to place a notice in the vestry requesting the choir to take their places five minutes before the start of the service. No vote was taken, but the minister promised to see all the choir and talk the matter over with them.³⁹⁷ Three years later it was proposed that 'the congregation be asked to join in more heartily with the repetition of the Lord's Prayer and the pastor promised to mention it on Sunday morning.'³⁹⁸

Colwyn Bay English Baptist church began the twentieth century on the site purchased in 1893. In 1909 the church called David Griffiths, who was known as 'the blind preacher' whose home church was Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr. In its early years Colwyn Bay was different from most other Baptist churches as the officers were referred to as the executive committee rather than the diaconate. In May 1910 the church unanimously adopted the executive committee's resolution 'it is highly desirable that a Forward Movement be inaugurated with a view to the erection of a new chapel at the earliest possible date.'³⁹⁹ At the December church meeting David Griffiths presented the building committee report which suggested 'the present site might be sold at a high figure, and land for a new site be obtained elsewhere for less than a quarter the price.'⁴⁰⁰ The trustees were instructed to 'place the property on the market at once.'⁴⁰¹ The site was sold in 1913 and land purchased at the corner of Princes Drive and Hawarden Road. The *North Wales Weekly News* reported the decision to move and 'in the meantime the services are to be held at the cinema and commenced last Sunday. The blind pastor officiated and a large congregation attended.'⁴⁰² In its report on the opening of the new building the *North Wales Weekly News* referred to the church also worshipping at Bethlehem Hall.⁴⁰³ The church minute book makes no reference to either venue. All the early references are to the building of the Sunday School. The secretary's report to the church meeting on 19 October 1914 refers to the opening of the curiously named 'School Church'⁴⁰⁴ which,

397

Ibid.

398

Ibid.

399

Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book, 1909-1927.

400

Ibid.

401

Ibid.

402

North Wales Weekly News, 14 February 1913 p.11.

403

North Wales Weekly News, 21 December 1913 p.6.

404

Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book, 1909-1927.

given the size of the new building, might suggest it was dual purpose for the use of the church and Sunday school

The first building for Old Colwyn Baptist church was a tin tabernacle. It must have been on leasehold land belonging to the Anglican church as the Baptists received a tithe-rent charge in 1901 which was an ironic reminder of the origins of the church in a school revolt in 1866. A new vicar had insisted on all children attending Sunday morning service. On the Monday after his first Sunday forty children were sent home from for non-attendance at church. That evening the leading nonconformists of the village decided to form a British School. Whilst it was being built classes were held in the hayloft at the Plough Inn.⁴⁰⁵ The tithe-rent charge for 17/7d included an explanation that it was:

not an annual charge but a payment to extinguish the charge for ever, subject to the payment of the tithe as usual to the end of the half year. The redemption money will be invested by Queen Anne's Bounty and the interest arising therefrom will take the place of the annual tithe rent charge hitherto collected from the land.

Payment of the tithe rent charge is compulsory and may be enforced through the County Court.⁴⁰⁶

The records of Old Colwyn do not reveal a fellowship woven with bitterness such as Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, but the end of Rev. Nankevill's ministry contained disproportionately angry correspondence over the non-payment of expenses. On 1 August 1900 Rev. Nankevill wrote to the secretary:

I have just arrived here from Old Colwyn, having left there about 2.00pm. Seeing how quickly you got into a temper yesterday when I spoke to you – I have thought it wise just to call upon you again on the subject.

After I left you I went to see Mr. Cousins and Mr. Brackston. They are much surprised you could ever think of letting a man leave in the way you were treating me. They said whether there was anything in hand or not it was your place to see that my expenses were paid.

I also saw Mr. Hughes who wished me to tell you from him that it was most dishonourable ...I hope to return to Colwyn Bay next week for a little rest before I take up my new work in September.

I also paid 2/6 for two meals elsewhere. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Parry are on the committee and they both said it would be a disgrace not to pay my expenses for

⁴⁰⁵ *Baptist Times*, 16 February 1906,

⁴⁰⁶ Old Colwyn Baptist Church archives, Tithe redemption No, 1338.

last weekend. And except I get my expenses (indecipherable) I will put the case in the hands of solicitors. I will not even wait for a committee meeting. You did not call a committee to send the £3-10-0d before it was due.

My expenses are as follows:

Railway fares	12/2
Miss Jones for 2 nights and breakfast	3/8
Mrs. Williams 2 nights	3/-
Total	18/10

If I do not get these by return of post I shall do as I said. I will also put the whole thing in the Colwyn Bay papers as well as the Baptist.

I blame no-one but yourself for this little unpleasantness.

J. Nankevill

P.S. I shall not soon forget your unkind remarks to me.⁴⁰⁷

The secretary called Nankevill's bluff and replied on 7 August that it was a unanimous decision by the committee that he was 'not entitled to a further grant of funds'⁴⁰⁸ because it believed he was not owed any money.⁴⁰⁹ The Committee minute book makes no reference to the exchange of letters but it does indicate Nankevill had given three months notice at the end of April expressing regret that he should find it needful to take such a step. No reason was offered. He had intimated in June, whilst serving his notice, that union with the English Congregational church 'might be made to advantage,'⁴¹⁰ but the secretary thought it was a misunderstanding and 'the matter was passed over.'⁴¹¹

Having decided that the tin tabernacle was becoming unfit for purpose the fellowship secured land for £450 and built a church and schoolroom in Ruabon brick for £2500. The church obtained a Century Fund grant of £500 from BUGB. The *Baptist Times* gave a lengthy account of the opening which included a cultural explanation of Welsh customs for the benefit of readers in England. The church found it difficult to decide whether the opening should take the form of a public meeting with addresses or a service with a sermon so 'in view of the voracious appetite of Welsh people for sermons it was decided

⁴⁰⁷ Old Colwyn Baptist Church archives.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Old Colwyn Baptist Church, committee minute book.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.'

to have addresses and a sermon.’⁴¹² The report added that the Welsh are accustomed to having two sermons at preaching festivals with only a hymn between them. People ‘are in no hurry (any more than people generally are in a hurry to leave a good concert) to get away if there be anything good in the way of preaching to listen to.’⁴¹³ Rev. W.R.Saunders of Penrallt, Bangor, gave ‘a powerful address on prayer’. Rev. J. Raymond gave an address on praise. Rev. Robert Jones of Manchester, a native of Colwyn Bay, spoke on preaching. Rev. A.J. Parry of the Welsh church in Rhyl deferred his address because the sermon was due to be preached by Rev. W. Cuff of Shoreditch Tabernacle, and the meeting had already lasted two hours when Rev. Cuff entered the pulpit.⁴¹⁴

In order to reduce the mortgage the church issued a general letter of appeal in 1910 which reads somewhere between a begging letter tugging the heart strings and an estate agent’s brochure tugging the purse strings. The main points were that the iron chapel had become unfit to assemble in and the fellowship was ‘compelled to find more suitable accommodation.’⁴¹⁵ It was felt ‘the future should be kept in view and that comfortable access in a building corresponding to twentieth century ideas should be provided.’⁴¹⁶ There were ‘an ever increasing number of English residents and continual visits of English people for rest and recreation.’⁴¹⁷ It was also the first church with entirely English services and the first English Free Church built in the neighbourhood. Endorsement was given through the sympathy of:

Rev. T. Phillips	Bloomsbury ChaepI, London
Rev. W. Cuff	Shoreditch Tabernacle, London
Rev. J.H. Atkinson	Liverpool
Rev. J.E. Roberts	Manchester
Principal Silas Morris	Bangor
Prof. Witton Davies	Bangor.

The church also issued a personal endorsement from F.B. Meyer, who had preached at the

⁴¹² *Baptist Times*, 16 February 1906.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

NWEBU meetings held in Old Colwyn during the summer of 1906. He wrote:

It is useless to complain of our Baptist people not being true to their denomination at holiday resorts unless we do our best to provide access. It is hardly fair to leave the heavy end of church erection on the handful of residents who do not require half the sittings they must provide for seasonal visitors.⁴¹⁸

The church meeting at Chester Street, Wrexham, considered an unusual baptismal request on 2 October 1917. The superintendent of the Star Hall mission in Manchester had written to Lewis Morris expressing a wish to be baptised having come to believe in baptism by immersion. The request was granted 'on the testimony of the pastor.'⁴¹⁹ and the baptism was arranged for the following Wednesday. Star Hall was an inner city mission founded by the industrialist engineer Frank Crossley. Theologically it belonged to the holiness movement that came to prominence in the second half of the nineteenth century. It had links with the International Holiness Mission founded in 1907 and was also the spiritual home of Nelson Parr who became one of the founding members of the Assemblies of God. After the death of Frank Crossley the work was handed over to the Salvation Army in 1919. The early twentieth century records for Chester Street give no indication about Lewis Morris' theology, and it has to be asked why the baptism should be fifty miles away in Wrexham. It is possible Lewis Morris had a personal connection with the anonymous superintendent given that his previous pastorate had been in Oldham.

Discord was never far from Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr. Some of the requests for transfer of membership were not free from friction, but the fault was not always on Ebenezer's part. At the September church meeting in 1902 the reply from Tabernacl Welsh Baptist chapel refused to transfer Ryland Jones' request because 'they could not transfer any of their members to a church in the neighbourhood.'⁴²⁰ Whether that was to any church or to Ebenezer in particular is a matter for speculation. The meeting decided that 'under the circumstances he be received into membership without a letter seeing that nothing could

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Old Colwyn Baptist Church archives.

⁴¹⁹ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book.

⁴²⁰ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

be said against him.⁴²¹ The following month Boaz Jones, his wife and daughter also sought membership having left Tabernacl without a letter of transfer.⁴²² Mrs. Ryland Jones found that obtaining a letter of transfer from Ebenezer was as difficult as getting one from Tabernacl to Ebenezer. In June 1915 she sought a letter of transfer to Poole Congregational church. The meeting agreed 'we do not give her a letter,'⁴²³ and that the 'secretary write and explain our position as Baptists in the matter.'⁴²⁴ The second minute book gives added detail for some of the entries. In this case the secretary's letter was to explain to her that it was not in Baptist rules to allow transfers to any other denomination.⁴²⁵ Perhaps the church had conveniently forgotten that Edward Griffith's request for a letter of transfer to the Salvation Army was agreed in April 1911.⁴²⁶ One positive factor at the church towards the end of this period was that the church meeting on 2 April 1918 did allow Leonard Coombs to preach at Bethel.⁴²⁷

Conclusion

Within the twenty years up to 1920 the NWEBU and its constituent churches had been influenced by a number of national and regional events. The beginning of general religious decline which was to characterize the whole of the twentieth century was countered by evangelistic efforts within north east Wales. The impact of the 1904 revival was considerably less than within the Welsh-speaking churches. Apart from the grief of bereaved relatives, the national tragedy of death and destruction during the First World War had little effect in curtailing church activities. In complete contrast, the establishment of the Baptist Union's Sustentation Fund and the introduction of Area Superintendents came to have a lasting effect on mutual relationships between the churches and the national union. On a regional level the approach made by the

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

⁴²⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/4 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

⁴²⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

Lancashire and Cheshire Association to the NWEBU, and Chester Street, Wrexham's decision to affiliate to that association permanently determined the context of associating. Evangelistic activities among the smaller churches of the industrial north east and a concern for their welfare set a geographical precedent that was to become a major facet of associating from the 1930s. Although founded in the nineteenth century by the goodwill of Welsh-speaking churches, linguistically, the English and Welsh-speaking churches now occupied their parallel worlds of tradition, but minor irritations with the perceived unreliability of the DFM association would loom larger as the century progressed. By 1920 the NWEBU had developed into the recognizable pattern of activity it was to sustain until the end of the century.

SUMMARY OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

CHAPTER FIVE

1900-1920

Leonard Coombs	Minister at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr
E.T. Davies	Minister of Old Colwyn ,and President of NWEBU in 1907
David Griffiths	Born in Cefn Mawr. Blind minister of Princes Drive. Became chaplain to RNIB during World War I
J. W. Humphreys	Minister at Mount Pleasant, Ponciau
Arthur Jones	Minister at Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay
Edward Jones	Deacon at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr
E.K. Jones	Influential minister of Tabernacl Welsh Baptist church, Brymbo
I.W. Jones	Deacon at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr
J.A. Jones	Member of Llandudno, and delegate to National Council for Civil Liberties meeting at Llandudno in 1918
Simon Jones	Deacon at Chester Street, Wrexham. Borough and County Councillor
J. McKeracher	Minister at Old Colwyn
Thomas Morgan	Minister at Ebenezer, Mold. President of NWEBU in 1910
George Morris	Deacon at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr. Later transferred to Bethel
Lewis Morris	Minister at Chester Street, Wrexham
J. Nankevill	Minister at Old Colwyn
John Raymond	Minister of Llandudno English Baptist church, and secretary of the NWEBU
Hector Thomas	Lancashire and Cheshire Association Superintendant and Secretary
William Williams	Minister at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr
Rev. Tom Phillips	Minister at Ponciau. Became minister at Bloomsbury Central Baptist church
Tom Wright	Deacon at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr

CHAPTER SIX

1920 – 2000

The period from 1920-2000 provides a continuum which renders consideration of shorter periods within the century somewhat artificial. Nationally, there were no outstanding political issues comparable with earlier controversies over education, for example, and changes of government made no difference to the life of the churches. The Second World War impacted the churches particularly with the loss of men to the armed forces, although conversely, one or two churches benefited from an influx of members as a consequence of the relocation of government departments. However there was to be no lasting effect. Post 1920, the national background provided a stability which had a minimal effect on the NWEBU and its churches. Whilst it can be viewed positively as giving freedom for development, it can also be regarded negatively, as a lack of engagement with national issues contributed to a gradual introversion that characterized English-speaking Baptist life in North Wales in the latter half of the century.

Regionally, the predominance of the Labour Party within Wales, including the north, had no significant influence on either the NWEBU or its churches. A pattern of church life became firmly set within the parallel worlds of north and south Wales, English and Welsh language churches, and the administrative systems of BUW and BUGB.

The principal external influence is seen within the tapestry of associating between NWEBU, its churches and BUGB rather than the mundane routines of business meeting, the comings and goings of ministers and the organization of BMS deputation visits. From the perspective of this holistic approach the BMS might appear to have a low profile. However rather than denigrate the support of the churches and their missionary contacts it sets the BMS as a firm fixture within the regular context of church routines. Within this relational setting geography and language played a comparatively minor role.

The NWEBU and the BUGB

Besides Ian Randall's excellently documented chronological account of the BUGB in the twentieth century,¹ several studies offer thematic and theological considerations of Baptist life and ecclesiology.² In broad terms, the debates within BUGB on the nature of ministry such as those emanating from the 1920 Lambeth Appeal to all Christians, and the effect of Arthur Dakin's book *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry* published in 1944³, are not reflected in the archives of the NWEBU churches. The divisiveness of the 1960s between mainstream denominational supporters and those inclined to the Baptist Revival Fellowship's perception that the BUGB establishment was over-influenced by ecumenism and liberalism had no great repercussions within North Wales.

The Christological furore created by Michael Taylor's address 'How much of a man was Jesus Christ?' at the annual assembly of 1971 similarly sparked little reaction. Only Zion, Penrycae, registered a response. Their secretary wrote to Trevor Hubbard, the Area Superintendent, in May 1972 asking who was responsible for the appointment of college principals and whether any of the BUGB affiliation fee was allocated for payment of principals' salaries.⁴ Hubbard replied that the appointment of the principal 'is the responsibility of the governing body of the college,'⁵ and 'the finances of the college are entirely a matter for the college.'⁶ There was no BUGB grant towards its salaries.

In broad terms the churches were preoccupied with their local work and witness. What might therefore be interpreted as apathy or parochialism can be countered with London being far away, and most church members being unaware of denominational affairs as only a small proportion subscribed to the *Baptist Times*. The NWEBU, as a district

¹ I.M. Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2005).

² A number of these are referenced later.

³ A. Dakin, *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1944).

⁴ North West Baptist Assoc, archives, letter from church secretary at Penrycae to Trevor Hubbard, 31 May, 1972.

⁵ North West Baptist Assoc, archives, letter from Trevor Hubbard to Penrycae Baptist Church secretary. 5 June 1972.

within the Lancashire and Cheshire Association, had no direct representation on the BUGB council until the re-alignment of associations in the 1990s. Their relationship with the BUGB was principally in terms of presenting the necessary financial and statistical details to secure the appropriate subsidy for the support of ministry, as the Penrallt, Bangor, returns show in Table 3. Other churches most frequently assisted in this way were Holyhead, Old Colwyn, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr and Ponciau.

The NWEBU was not uninterested in the BUGB. For an area well removed from the Baptist hub in London and the south east of England, the twice yearly NWEBU meetings addressed several contemporary denominational issues during the inter-war period:

- 1926/7 Visit of B.U. Messengers 'to help and encourage the churches'.
- 1929 Baptists and the challenge of sacramentarianism
- 1936 The public resolutions in the *Liverpool Daily Post*
- 1937 The Forward Movement.

The pamphlet produced in 1926 entitled *Visitation to the churches by Baptist Union Messengers* initiated action in North Wales primarily through the NWEBU's membership of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association. The leaflet for the North West of England, which by BUGB definition included the NWEBU churches, referred to messengers visiting the area to help and encourage churches and kindle new flames of commitment to Christ. 'Our young people should know the tradition of faith and sacrifice we possess as Baptists and be inspired to keep the glorious succession unbroken. We must take counsel together as to what more we can do to constrain our children to make choice of Christ's way of life.'⁷ This national initiative utilised a variation of the seventeenth century title 'messenger'. In 1915 J.H. Shakespeare used it of emissaries for the introduction of area superintendents. His successor, M.E Aubrey, used it for lead people in regionalized evangelistic strategies in the early 1930s.

The following programme was made for the churches in north east Wales:

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1936.

Church	Date	Appointed Messenger
Ponciau	23 November	Owen Thomas
Groes	26 November	Powell Griffiths
Ebenezer Cefn Mawr	30 November	Vaughan Morris
Lodge/Brymbo	30 November	Vincent Greenwood & Mr. D.T Morison
Wrexham	1 December	Vaughan Morris
Salem Newydd	6 December	Rev. J. McKeracher & Mr. D.T. Morison

An area conference was arranged for 7 December at Chester Street, Wrexham. The keynote speaker, Rev. J. Glyn Edwards from Birmingham, became the designated Messenger to North Wales for the evangelistic strategies of the early 1930s.⁸

In 1927 the pamphlet was reworked for the coastal churches. The area conference was to be addressed by M.E. Aubrey who was appointed general secretary of the BUGB in 1925.

The schedule was:

Church	Date	Appointed Messenger
Flint	19 January	Rev. J. McKeracher
Bangor	31 January	Rev. Vaughan-Morris
Rhyl	2 February	Rev. Wilkinson Whiteley
Colwyn Bay	3 February	W.H. Condy
Old Cowyn	3 February	Rev. J. McKeracher ⁹

In 1929 Henry Townsend, the principal of Manchester Baptist College, addressed the annual meeting in Bangor on ‘Baptists and the challenge of sacramentarianism.’ He abhorred Shakespeare’s apparent willingness for Baptists to be episcopally ordained in the interests of unity, and had a perception of ‘Baptist control from Church House.’¹⁰

In 1934 the NWEBU Executive Committee met in Wrexham and considered a letter from the BUGB Council about the advisability of having a joint committee of Baptists and Congregationalists for consultation in the event of opening new causes, and thought ‘it

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.117.

might be useful.’¹¹ Nationally it was a period of considerable discussion between Baptists and Congregationalists who had much in common. Wheeler Robinson, principal of Regent’s Park Baptist College, and Percy Evans, principal of Spurgeon’s College, who were amongst those involved in the conversations, considered questions of baptism in relation to Congregational and Presbyterian practice. The BUGB special committee concluded ‘believer’s baptism whether called an ordinance or sacrament was of the most serious import.’¹² The BUGB committee also agreed Baptists could not recognize infant baptism as a valid baptism and ‘any attempt to force the BUGB to do so would be divisive.’¹³ No greater detail is recorded in the NWEBU minutes, but the phrase ‘might be useful’ in relation to participation with Congregationalists may have sown a seed in the NWEBU consciousness which contributed to the post war merger between Princes Drive and the English Congregational church in Colwyn Bay.

During the early 1930s there was general support from Baptists for the League of Nations. Ian Randall cites the Bristol and District Association as a typical example with resolutions declaring ‘continued support for international peace.’¹⁴ The NWEBU showed itself in step through the publication of a long resolution in the *Liverpool Daily Post* regarding the government’s programme of increased armaments. It re-affirmed faith in the League of Nations and urged the government to ‘treat seriously the causes of war.’¹⁵ The resolution also expressed concern at ‘the lamentable purpose of brewers.’¹⁶ It deplored the rapid increase in gambling, expressed sympathy with the large number of the unemployed and regretted the demoralizing effect of the means test on family life.’¹⁷

During the 1930s denominational concern was expressed about attempts to combat numerical decline not making headway. In his presidential address in 1936 Henry

¹¹ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1936.

¹² Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.178.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 197, quoting L.G. Champion, *Bristol and District Association of Baptist Churches, 1823-1978* (Bristol:1973),p.31.

¹⁵ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book, 1904-1936.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Townsend referred to the 'Forward Movement' which had been launched as being 'of God.'¹⁸ M.E. Aubrey gave the concept his full backing writing 'a crust, like ice, seems to have formed in some places over the life of our churches ... That must be broken.'¹⁹ The NWEBU annual meetings in Rhyl on 27 May 1937 included a conference on the Baptist Forward Movement, which cited the new building at Shotton as its special choice.²⁰

Ian Randall refers to the increasing role of women, particularly in the establishment of deaconesses 'to help smaller churches.'²¹ Women had served as deaconesses since 1890, whilst women ministers were recognized from 1926 when there were three on the Accredited List of Baptist Ministers. Initially the role of deaconesses had centred on social work and visitation, but 'as the nature of the role developed over the decades it became increasingly clear that many deaconesses were in effect functioning as pastors of churches.'²² This was the experience of Shotton Baptist church for a brief period during the 1930s.

In 1932 the Lancashire and Cheshire Association appointed Ivy Manning as an itinerant sister.²³ Mrs. Barson, secretary of the Baptist Women's League, arranged for her to assist Shotton at the end of 1935. The church was asked to obtain suitable rooms, a task given to the ladies. As a guide price the BWL had not paid more than 27/6 per week exclusive of laundry for a sitting room and bedroom.²⁴ Mrs. Barson indicated that Sister Ivy preferred staying with someone not attached to the church 'which would give her more freedom.'²⁵ The work was 'chiefly visiting, organizing for Sunday school, young people, women etc., and no funerals or weddings.'²⁶ Sunday services were not normally taken although it was customary for a sister to take a service soon after arriving and prior to

¹⁸ Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.163 quoting *Baptist Times* 16 April 1936, p.294.

¹⁹ Ibid, quoting *Baptist Times* 2 February 1933, p.75

²⁰ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 North Wales English Baptist Union minute book: 1904-1936

²¹ Randal, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.143

²² 'Women in Leadership among the Churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain,' A report to Baptist Union Council, March 2010, p.9.

²³ *Baptist Union Handbook* for 1932, p.269.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Shotton Baptist Church minute book, 21 July 1935.

leaving. If other services were occasionally taken the fee normally paid to a minister should be paid to the sisterhood fund.²⁷ A proposal that a fee of £1 for Sunday services be paid to the sisterhood was lost, but one for the payment of 10/- was carried.²⁸ Shotton agreed that 'Sister Ivy be appointed to preside at the communion service on the first Sunday of each month.'²⁹ For her second spell at Shotton, in June and July 1936, the church agreed that she 'conduct the morning service and address the midweek service.'³⁰ Unofficially the church regarded her as their minister.

Sisters were generally admitted to membership without a transfer and invited to all church meetings. By current standards, slave labour conditions applied as 'sister has one free day per month arranged according to local conditions.'³¹ It was also customary that no money was given directly to a sister. A weekly contribution was forwarded to BWL funds if a church could afford it, and a thank offering was usually made at the close of a placement and sent to Mrs. Nuttall, the BWL treasurer, at St. Anne's on Sea.³² Within a month of Sister Ivy's arrival the church wrote to the BWL asking for a three month extension 'owing to the enormous success of her work in the district.'³³ The Sunday school had grown from twelve to seventy-one scholars. The congregation had more than doubled, a women's meeting had been started with an attendance of thirty and a midweek children's meeting attracted between seventy and eighty. The letter concluded 'we are having glorious times at Shotton and we feel justified in asking for an extension.'³⁴ Vera Barson allowed Sister Ivy to stay until the end of February.³⁵ A further extension was requested in January 1936. In reply Vera Barson explained that Sister Ivy was being sent to Clarksfield, Oldham for March, April and May but could return to Shotton for June and

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid, 2 October 1935.
30 Ibid, 7 June 1936.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid, 29 September 1935.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid, 10 November 1935.

July. The 'outspoken wife of the minister of Claremont, Bolton'³⁶ who had now moved to Manchester, added that the committee was happy about the results at Shotton but the church itself had to 'consolidate the work and make it permanent.'³⁷ If the Shotton returns for 1939 are accurate, as shown in Table 14, the church was not entirely successful in doing that. It also seemed by quoting the new building as North Wales' example of the Forward Movement in 1937 the NWEBU had overlooked mission being primarily about people rather than buildings.

Comparative membership figures from 1916 to 2000 are shown in Table 2. Between 1916 and 1939 several churches kept a fairly consistent level of membership. Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay, shows a continual rise. Chester Street, Wrexham, and Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, show the greatest falls. Llandudno, Buckley and Leeswood show a peak and a fall. Shotton's figures, as mentioned, show no indication of the growth from the work of Sister Ivy.

From 1946 to 2000 decline is most evident in Union Church, Colwyn Bay, Flint and the Wrexham area churches. Growth is most marked in Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay, and Rhyl, the two churches that experienced charismatic renewal. The dip in Rhyl's membership for 2000 includes those involved in establishing the Grapevine Fellowship, and although not shown in the returns, the church plant at Llanelwy was beginning to develop. Penrallt, Bangor, shows a more consistent level of membership. Llandudno's figures reveal a gradual decline which accelerated following the compulsory purchase of their site by Mostyn Estates for commercial development in the late 1960s which led to many years of temporary accommodation in varying locations.

In the post war period there was less discussion about BUGB affairs. The NWEBU became pre-occupied with its annual appointments and did not consider a nationwide denominational theme until the executive committee met in Rhyl on 14 January 1965. Baptists in the mid 1960s appeared less tied to the BUGB through involvement with the

³⁶ Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.156.

British Youth for Christ, the Keswick movement and pan-denominational charismatic renewal, as Ian Randall has shown.³⁸ He refers to David Bebbington's phrase 'a psychology of withdrawal,'³⁹ in the context of Baptists sensing a need to put their own house in order before turning their attention to the nation at large. Within North Wales the fire for involvement in public and political affairs had more or less been extinguished. There were no more of the ilk of Simon Jones. The NWEBU had retreated from its collective gospel related socio-political activism into an introspective pre-occupation with denominational routines and bureaucracy.

The BUGB held a denominational conference in May 1961 to consider organizational issues which resulted in a commission to examine matters of associating. It reported in 1964 when a second denominational conference led to an increase in association representatives being appointed to the BUGB council, and became 'a significant move towards seeing the Union as an association of Associations.'⁴⁰

In considering this scenario the NWEBU executive agreed on six fundamental points, some of which anticipated the work undertaken under the overall heading 'Towards 2000' which resulted in the move of the Union's offices to Didcot and the restructuring of the BUGB into its current format. The executive deemed the Declaration of Principle an adequate basis for doctrine. An anomaly which should be investigated was the view that churches belonging to an association but not the BUGB were considered by definition to be members of the union. None of the NWEBU churches were in that category. However when Leeswood sought membership of the North Western Association in the 1990s it did not join BUGB until November 2001. The NWEBU committee also agreed personal members of the BUGB should no longer have the same voting rights as a church. The title 'Personal Member' should be replaced by 'Friend of the Union'. The BUGB constitution should be revised to allow a larger council as the sole legislative body thus

³⁷ Shotton Baptist church minute book 30 January 1936.

³⁸ Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, pp.327-8.

³⁹ Ibid, p.526.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.329.

freeing the annual assembly for mutual fellowship and inspiration. The gap between associations and union was not satisfactorily filled by area committees which should therefore cease to exist. Some associations were regarded as too big to function effectively so there should be more associations with a more uniform size. Additional area superintendents would be required but their 'intolerable burden' would be reduced.⁴¹

Twenty years passed before the NWEBU considered another national matter at the annual meeting in Union Church, Colwyn Bay, in May 1985, namely finding a new title for the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. Geographical implications not only applied to Ireland but how a new title might be regarded within Wales. The Irish churches were no longer represented and wished to be released from the title. The English Baptist Union was suggested as a compromise, but was deemed inappropriate for churches in Wales. Stephen Heap of Wrexham suggested 'in view of the nationalist, cultural and ecumenical context in which we were endeavouring to work in Wales,'⁴² that 'The Baptist Union in England and affiliated churches' was a possibility. Trevor Hubbard commented that both 'B.U. in England', and 'B.U. in England and Wales' had been decisively rejected by the Welsh union.⁴³

The next consideration of national matters, in October 1994 at the half-yearly meeting in Holyhead, was a lengthy discussion on the proposals for restructuring the BUGB. The context of the exercise was that the churches faced a missionary culture. Whereas twenty years previously many people had a church allegiance, the current question was 'why should I belong to anything?' Chris Haig, the Lancashire and Cheshire Association secretary, introduced the two key papers. He inferred that the 'purple paper', on the nature of the Baptist Union Assembly, posed the question how would the union be known if it did not become the Baptist Church of Great Britain? The 'green paper' questioned the size of the BUGB council, the representation of gender, age and race and asked where when and how often council should meet.

⁴¹ Ruthin Records. Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU minute book, 1937-70.

⁴² NWEBU minute Book, 1971 - ,13 April 1985, p.104.

⁴³ Ibid.

The ensuing discussion raised many opinions including the green paper 'smacks of political correctness whereas it should be spiritually correct.'⁴⁴ The purple paper, in failing to communicate its meaning and intention, was guilty of 'double-speak.'⁴⁵ Did it refer to a Baptist national or local church? The meeting re-affirmed two fundamental Baptist principles in the baptism of believers and the congregational basis of church government. It considered *episkopos* and *presbuteros* to be equal terms. Denominational 'leaders are administrators and advisers to the local churches.'⁴⁶ The meeting believed both documents had missed the point that there should be greater emphasis on local churches and mission. Local churches 'must assent to ideas not be told.'⁴⁷ The NWEBU affirmed the mutuality of associating. The key lay not in a centralised church but a central administration. The concept of six years maximum service on BUGB council was regarded as 'wrong and ridiculous'⁴⁸ depriving the council of experience, and the associations of the ability to appoint whom they wished. Gender representation could not be considered right and would 'lead to insisting on equal Welsh and English representatives and who was Welsh or English.'⁴⁹

The meeting affirmed the role of unaccredited ministers who should have the right to attend the annual assembly as ministers of constituent churches having a basic covenantal relationship with the BUGB. Accreditation was deemed to be national whereas to be unaccredited was local. Prayer, discussion and sensitivity were considered 'more important than macro-management.'⁵⁰ The meeting thought the annual assembly too big and unwieldy and asked 'is the Scottish system better?'⁵¹ The minutes give no indication as to why the Scottish system was suggested, nor why the BUW's assembly arrangements were not put forward. It also believed 'churches whose prime allegiance is to the BUW

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1 October 1994, pp.210-11.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

should not have representation on council.’⁵²

The denominational consultation held at Swanwick in 1996 was an opportunity to consider ‘contemporary mission in a postmodern context.’⁵³ An ‘excellent and positive report’⁵⁴ was given at the Autumn meeting of the NWEBA but its secretary, Brian Strangward, was instructed to send a critical letter to David Coffey the general secretary of BUGB:

A number of those present reminded the meeting that the “denominational conference” was not a denominational one at all, since such a title would have to include churches in the BUW, the Baptist Union of Scotland, and other unions and associations.⁵⁵

Without revealing his source, Brian Strangward quoted some statistics to reinforce his point ‘relating to churches in the coastal counties of North Wales.’⁵⁶

116 churches in membership with the BUW of which 13 are in dual membership with BUGB.

13 churches in the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of which 12 are in membership with BUGB and the other being a very active member whilst remaining in membership with the BUW. (Leeswood)

A number of churches ... which are not in membership with any of the above.⁵⁷

The final NWEBU consideration of national issues occurred at the half-yearly meeting at Llandudno in April 1998. The subject was the ‘Relating and Resourcing’ documentation as the BUGB implemented its restructuring through the creation of larger associations with a team of regional ministers instead of one area superintendent. The Lancashire and Cheshire Association would become the North Western Baptist Association. The districts would be replaced by a central council and more localized clusters of churches. The appropriateness of such a system was deemed unsuitable for North Wales which had its own geographical difficulties. The NWEBU had also been established as a union in its

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.531.

⁵⁴ North West Baptist Assoc. archive, copy of letter from B. Strangward (NWEBU secretary) to David Coffey (BUGB General Secretary), 2 October, 1996.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

own right and remained as such despite becoming a district within with the Lancashire and Cheshire Association in 1912. The decision was taken to remain as one geographical unit rather than sub-divide into clusters. Consequently, as a self-contained unit within the new association, the NWEBU should have its own elected representative to serve on BUGB council. Its secretary informed David Coffey that the NWEBU had unanimously passed the following resolution:

That this Union confirms that it will continue to meet as constituted: to appoint a BUGB council member; to support the NWBA however that body may be re-structured; and of course takes no issue with the document *Relating and Resourcing* which is not the concern of this union.⁵⁸

It will be apparent from the major subjects considered by the NWEBU that an objective sense of passionate involvement in social, educational and political issues which characterised their forbears had evaporated into an introverted preoccupation about representation on association and denominational bodies, alongside the annual round of committee appointments and the returns required for Home Mission support.

Liturgical matters

Liturgical issues were frequently considered within Baptist life at a national level, but without any significant influence within the English Baptist churches of North Wales. J.H. Briggs' phrase 'a study in changing contexts,'⁵⁹ can be transposed from a study of the historical background of the BUGB to a consideration of liturgical development in Baptist life. The three phases of Baptist sacramentalism outlined by A.R. Cross⁶⁰ would hardly have been recognized, although many would have nodded in agreement with C.J. Ellis that Baptist antipathy to the term 'sacrament' was predominantly a response to Roman Catholic and reformed churches institutional commitment to a comprehensive state

⁵⁸ North West Baptist Assoc. archives. Letter from M. Brain to David Coffey, 22 April 1999.

⁵⁹ J.H. Briggs, 'Confessional identity, denominational institutions, and relationships with others: a study in changing contexts' in P.E. Thompson and A.R. Cross (eds.) *Recycling the Past or Researching History: studies in Baptist historiography and myths* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2005).

A.R. Cross 'The myth of English Baptist anti-sacramentalism' in *Recycling the Past or*

church.⁶¹ Despite this, the language of Ellis' theological reflections would not have been easily understood. For example 'if faith becomes the key pivot of divine activity, that very faith looks to God's graciousness and offers not an anthropocentric, but theocentric understanding of what happens in baptism.'⁶² Whilst Baptist theologians might have been viewed as trading in semantic niceties, there are numerous references in the annals of some of the churches to changes in the practice of worship, which is interesting to place within the emerging liturgical developments of the century. Norman Wallwork's comment that *Orders and Prayers for Christian Worship* was only used by college principals and area superintendents⁶³ was not far from the truth. Ministerial usage for weddings and funerals could be added, but for North Wales it set the contrast between liturgical theology and general practice.

Similarly the explanatory sections within the worship manuals seeking to anchor worship and liturgy in contemporary settings for the enhancement of corporate devotional life appear to bear little relation to the comments of church members. The introduction to *Orders and Prayers for Christian Worship*⁶⁴ describes Christian worship as 'essentially Eucharistic.'⁶⁵ It states the 'priesthood of all believers has implications for worship which for too long have been ignored ... as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit the local congregation should endeavour to develop a truly congregational worship, utilizing the spiritual gifts of all its members.'⁶⁶ With worship it was 'a mistake to set freedom and tradition, spontaneity and form in violent antithesis.'⁶⁷

In contrast to these formal expressions the consensus of the Salem Newydd church meeting on 17 August 1954 was that 'the standard of reverence was below that witnessed

Researching History, p.153.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.158.

⁶² Ibid p.159.

⁶³ N. Wallwork 'Developments in liturgy and worship in twentieth century nonconformity' in A.P.F. Sell & A.R. Cross, *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press,2003), p.121.

⁶⁴ E.A. Payne and S.F. Winward, *Orders and Prayers for Christian Worship* (London: BUGB, 1960).

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.xii.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.xiii.

in some of our sister churches. The matter should receive every member's attention.'⁶⁸ The practice of giving thanks after the offering was to be adopted. Uncertainty whether to sit or stand for the children's hymn in the evening service was ended by agreeing that 'in future the congregation will stand.'⁶⁹ Salem Newydd bears witness to the innate conservatism of many Baptists. In 1963 new hymnbooks were required. The new Baptist hymnbook was recently published, *Hymns of Faith* had not long been published, *Redemption Hymnal* first published in 1951 was still widely available as were other compilations. The members opted to buy copies of Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos* first published in 1903. Salem Newydd members may not have expressed their views with theological exactitude, but they typified the spirit of comments made throughout the period within various churches. There was little or no theological appreciation of the subtleties of word and sacrament, but members did want their services to reflect the best they could offer to the Lord.

Members at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, may have found difficulty defining differences between the concepts of ordinance, which views communion as a command of Jesus to be obeyed, and sacrament, which adds the physical significance of bread and wine as conveying spiritual grace. However their decision taken in 1924 only to allow an ordained minister or a Baptist college student to give communion until an elder was appointed reflected their high regard for holy communion, if not of the priesthood of all believers. Members decided in 1925 by eight votes to seven that the Lord's Prayer would not be sung. In 1938 their August church meeting, having discussed the vespers, decided they would use three: 'Grant us thy peace', 'Lord keep us safe this night', and 'Abide with me'. One would be sung for two months when one of the others would be chosen for two months 'providing the precentor tells pastor to announce it beforehand.'⁷⁰ The church meeting decided in October 1946 that the introit should be printed so as not to embarrass visitors.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.xiv

⁶⁸ Ruthin Record Office, ND/37/1 Salem Newydd Baptist Church, minute book no. 3, 1952-1982.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ruthin Record Office, ND/70/7 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

⁷¹ Ruthin Record Office, ND/70/8 minute book Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

Penrallt, Bangor wrestled with the pros and cons of chanting. Their minister, Thomas Morgan, raised the matter in the church meeting of 27 March 1923 stating the introduction of the practice was his responsibility 'entirely for the good of the church ... to bring the services as much up to date as possible.'⁷² The decision proved controversial and raised the issue of the balance between the democracy of the church meeting and overall peace within the fellowship. Objections were raised at the meeting and for the 'peace of the church'⁷³ the members were willing to discontinue the practice. Thomas Morgan made it clear that any withdrawal of practice was not because it was wrong, in fact 'it was entirely right,'⁷⁴ but 'entirely for the sake of peace.'⁷⁵ On 15 April a vote was taken to proceed with chanting by a majority of twenty-eight to twelve. However it was reported to the church meeting on 1 May the pastor and deacons had discussed the matter and decided if notice was taken of the majority the chanting would continue, but as it was not a very important matter and a number of members were opposed 'it was hoped the majority would show a real Christian spirit.'⁷⁶ It was carried unanimously that there be no more chanting.

The church which experienced the most liturgical progression was Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay. In the 1960s their liturgical tinkering was similar to Cefn Mawr and Bangor. At the July church meeting the pastor suggested the congregation be encouraged to take a fuller part in the services 'possibly by the amen.'⁷⁷ The matter was discussed in successive deacons' meetings which recommended responsive readings and louder amens. In 1968 the November deacons' meeting recommended it would be 'nice to join in a communal amen accompanied by the organ at the close of each service.'⁷⁸ At the October church meeting in 1969 the minister, Douglas Allingham, in line with the practice in other churches suggested that an occasional dialogue with a doctor, teacher or businessman

⁷² Penrallt Baptist Church Bangor, minute book.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book., 3 July 1963.

instead of a sermon might attract people. 'The church gave leave to experiment.'⁷⁹ Sadly there is no record of the outcome. The same meeting agreed to alter the order of the evening service 'so that the sequence of worship would be progressive.'⁸⁰ The features of the service would be a call to worship, followed by the Word of God, the response, and the close of worship. The move did not meet with popular approval. The following April the church meeting agreed to revert to the previous order from 1 May, but to include a responsive scripture reading.

At the end of the 1970s under the ministry of Peter Radford, a staid and conservative membership struggled with the revolution of charismatic renewal. It became a traumatic time with ramifications that are considered under associating. The church moved from what Christopher Ellis has described as the liturgical sequence to the charismatic,⁸¹ the central feature being the role of the sermon. In liturgical sequence it is the servant of the read Word leading to the celebration of the Eucharist. In charismatic sequence the sermon offers an explanation or preparation for the experience of the Holy Spirit in prayer and ministry.⁸² The emergence of Princes Drive from a traditional to a growing charismatically orientated church, illustrates Ian Randall's point that in the post-war years it was the charismatic movement, in tune as it was with the anti-institutionalism of the 1960s, which saw advance.⁸³

There are brief liturgical references in the archives of the NWEBU. In 1926 the presidential address was on 'The Spirit and Techniques of Public Worship'. Whilst the recorded comment was that 'it was greatly appreciated,'⁸⁴ no details have survived. The annual meetings at Bangor in 1929 considered 'Baptists and the Challenge of Sacramentarianism.' The theme was introduced by Henry Townsend who was firmly

⁷⁸ Ibid, 1 November 1968.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 8 October 1969.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ C.J. Ellis, *Gathering: A theology and spirituality of worship in Free Church tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), p.62.

⁸² Ibid p.69.

⁸³ I.M. Randall, *Evangelical Experience; A study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism 1918-1939* (Carisle: Paternoster Press, 1999). p.278.

opposed to the possibility of reunion in the wake of the 1920 Lambeth *Appeal to all Christian People*. He elaborated the contrast between the Roman Catholic and Anglo-catholic approach to God through creeds, and sacramental channels ‘which fetter the mind and the freedom of access to the Divine which Baptists stand for’⁸⁵ through their emphasis on personal conviction and responsibility. The minutes do not reflect Townsend’s conviction that churches in the north believed their principles were being given away by a union that sought to stifle criticism, and that there was a north-south tension between Baptist churches.⁸⁶

The final key liturgical reference is in the minutes of the executive committee that met in Rhyl in 1948. The afternoon was spent considering problems of public worship. It considered scriptural, theological and psychological reasons for public worship in relation to congregational singing, preaching, and a simpler form of congregational worship. Its conclusion was that ‘the present method of conducting worship was largely out of touch with reality,’⁸⁷ but no remedy was suggested. Overall the NWEBU churches have not been noted for liturgically elaborate services and have generally kept to variations of the hymn-prayer sandwich, although some churches, more notably Bangor, Princes Drive, Old Colwyn, Rhyl, Llanelwy and Leeswood now provide a more open sandwich.

The three formative factors

The overall external relationship with BUGB was one in which the NWEBU responded to denominational initiatives but, as evidenced in the decision to remain as a union following the re-organisation of BUGB and association structures in 1998, it was prepared to make its own decisions and shape its own destiny.

Whilst the NWEBU operated throughout this period in the same recognizable format, the

⁸⁴ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/1 NWEBU minute book, 1904-1936.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, p.117.

⁸⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU minute book, 1937-70.

three formative factors played a significant role in confirming the character of the union.

Geographical factors

Geographically, North Wales played a strategic role during the Second World War because it was considered a relatively safe region. Several government departments were evacuated to the area, mainly from the south of England, consequently there were transfers of membership to Old Colwyn from Baptist churches in Watford, Wandsworth Common, Orpington, Upton Cross which was a branch of West Ham Central Mission, and Valley Memorial church in Dagenham. The secretary of Penge Baptist church wrote how 'Miss Spike was evacuated for business reasons.'⁸⁸ Other evacuated members came from Cleveleys, Erdington in Birmingham and Birkenhead.

Penrall, Bangor, also received Baptists from London and the south east. At the November church meeting in 1940 Dr. H.H. Rowley's proposal that 'we invite to our church meetings baptised members of other churches now worshipping with us,'⁸⁹ was approved unanimously. There was a vacancy on the diaconate at the annual meeting for 1942 and as a gesture to Mr. Clarke 'and our London friends of our warm feelings towards them,'⁹⁰ he was invited to serve as an associate deacon. At the following annual meeting Miss Hanson, representing the friends from London, thanked the pastor and church for making them so welcome and 'able to feel at home.'⁹¹

Whilst several government departments were relocated to North Wales, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay, considered accommodating an evacuated minister. In July 1940 the secretary received a letter from the general superintendents seeking temporary settlement for ministers of churches on the south coast which had been badly affected by the war. The church offered a temporary pastorate to Rev. Ivor Wensley of Deal. The stipend would be

⁸⁸ Old Colwyn Baptist Church, minute book.

⁸⁹ Penrallt Baptist Church, Bangor, minute book.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

£200p.a. on the understanding that he should not attend or officiate at deacons' or church meetings as the church 'wished to be perfectly free to discuss and decide upon all matters relating to the future of the pastorate.'⁹² The church was currently without a pastor but called Rev. G.N. Williams in 1941.

Their minutes make no further reference to Wensley. However Victoria Baptist Church, Deal, was in a condition in which it was not able to pay the stipend so 'he left the church in such a manner which would enable him to return when conditions improved,'⁹³ and accepted the pastorate in South Harrow 'for the duration,'⁹⁴ as their minister was serving as a chaplain. The South Harrow records confirm his ministry from 1940-45.⁹⁵ 'Wensley returned to Deal in on 1 April 1945 and served until 1949.'⁹⁶

The affinity with the north west of England is clearly seen in the transfers of membership to Old Colwyn in the mid-1920s from Staylybridge, Ashton under Lyne, Stockport, Manchester, Chester, Birkenhead and Burnley. In terms of the NWEBU itself geography was at times inseparably woven with issues of language and associating. During 1962-3, as part of the long running concern for the small pastorless churches within north east Wales, Norman Jones, the Lancashire and Cheshire area superintendent, had been in touch with the DFM regarding the possibility of grouping English and Welsh churches. The eventual outcome was both a suggested bilingual pastorate in Wrexham, and a meeting of the deacons of the English and Welsh churches in Cefn Mawr and Llangollen. Nothing came of either opportunity, but the NWEBU formed two committees for the coastal churches and the so-called inland area churches 'to consider how to make the work in North Wales more viable.'⁹⁷

⁹² Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book.

⁹³ Photocopy of the entry on Ivor Wensley from *A History of the Pastorates of Victoria Baptist Church, Deal*, forwarded to me by the church secretary 11 May 2009.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ E-mail dated 21 May 2009 from Paul Luckham, treasurer at South Harrow Baptist Church.

⁹⁶ Personal letter from K.F. Woods, Secretary Victoria Baptist church Deal from 1966-94, 10 June 2009.

Serious consideration was given during 1991 to the possibility of a single Baptist union for the whole of Wales. For the NWEBU the implications for language and associating were clearly outweighed by geography. North Wales has a longstanding sense of isolation from the south which since devolution, primarily because of the in-balance of population and its consequences for formula-funding, has led to accusations of the north being the neglected half of Wales. The perceived north-south divide ensured that the proposal for a single union received a cool reception within the NWEBU executive.

The initiative was outlined in a letter dated 17 June 1991 to David Coffey, the BUGB general secretary, from High Street Baptist Church, Merthyr Tydfil,⁹⁸ reflecting the views of several BUGB and BUW ministers in South Wales. Their premise was that the BUW 'is usually perceived as being too weak to achieve much in the way of mission,'⁹⁹ whereas the BUGB was seen as large and dynamic but with 'severely limited involvement in Wales and understanding of Wales.'¹⁰⁰ The BUW 'was originally conceived as an administrative body rather than a mission-orientated one.'¹⁰¹ Given four decades of decline, mission was a priority. One bilingual union for the principality would allow resources to be 'more effectively released into the Welsh mission field.'¹⁰² Such a move would also make the Baptist sense of interdependence 'more urgent and meaningful.'¹⁰³ The NWEBU considered the proposal at a meeting in Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay, on 30 August 1991. The overall response was to welcome the stimulus but 'the language, culture and geographical differences between North, South and Central Wales combine to make the coming together of four unions into one body very difficult.'¹⁰⁴

The BUGB's occasional lapse of geographical awareness is indicated in a letter to Chris

⁹⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU minute book, 1937-70.

⁹⁸ North West Baptist Assoc. archives. Copy of letter from High Street Baptist Church, Merthyr Tydfil to David Coffey, 17 June 1991.

⁹⁹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives. Copy of briefing paper 'Baptist Churches and Mission in Wales', 1991.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, BAPT-UN/BUBG-BUW aide memoire 30 August 1991.

Haig, the Lancashire and Cheshire association secretary, in October 1995 informing him that page 18 of the BUGB Directory for 1994-95 'refers to the secretary of the North Wales English Association.'¹⁰⁵ The BUGB officer stated 'I am not aware that this Association exists,'¹⁰⁶ and asked whether the association would object to the removal of the reference and of the NWEBU secretary from the list of representatives for Lancashire and Cheshire. The failure of the BUGB official to check whether 'association' had been mistakenly substituted for 'union', and his automatic inclusion of North Wales within Lancashire and Cheshire indicated the lack of involvement with and understanding of Wales as expressed in the 1991 Merthyr Tydfil letter suggesting a single union for Wales.

As a minor geographical factor, before Shotton became English-speaking in 1931 it shared ministry with Penri Welsh Baptist church, Chester, as indicated in table 12. During the early 1960s tables 18 and 19 show it shared ministry with Grosvenor Park, Chester. In the 1990s it temporarily transferred to the Merseyside district of the Lancashire and Cheshire association because the lay pastor lived on the Wirral.

Linguistic factors

Language and associating are intertwined, particularly in attempts to grapple with the small churches several of which were facing decline. The issues are clearly set out in an undated joint memorandum sent to the DFM and Lancashire and Cheshire associations with the recommendation it be forwarded to their respective unions. From the typeface and context it is reasonable to assume it dates from 1962. At the annual meeting of the NWEBU at Colwyn Bay, Norman Jones, the Lancashire and Cheshire Area Superintendent, reported that he had contacted the secretary of the DFM regarding the possibility of grouping English and Welsh churches,¹⁰⁷ and suggested that representatives from the two associations should meet. The names put forward were Revs. Alwyn Lake-Thomas of Union Church, Colwyn Bay, and Glynne Davies Jones from the DFM.

¹⁰⁵ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter PMP/MCH, 4 October 1995.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2, NWEBU minute book, 1937-70.

The memorandum acknowledged that some of the English churches were ‘started by Welsh Baptists to cater for the non-Welsh-speaking incomers.’¹⁰⁸ It referred to relationships between the two associations not being cultivated in the last ten years in terms of organization and fellowship. ‘Welsh and English churches have grown weaker even though they have lived side by side.’¹⁰⁹ It recognised the situation could continue but cooperation was only possible if the ‘associations have the blessing of the two unions, and there is mutual recognition of ministries and the availability of grants-in-aid from both.’¹¹⁰

The memorandum also highlighted the advantages of a united witness to a bilingual community, and a challenge for Welsh-speaking ministers to return to Wales. Cooperation would ‘help to destroy the sense of isolation and false independence which is destroying many of our churches.’¹¹¹ The churches would be ‘taught a new sense of stewardship,’¹¹² that would raise stipends to a more adequate level, and make possible a united witness to new and developing areas. To the detriment of north east Wales nothing developed. The initiative for a bilingual pastorate in Wrexham was ultimately unsuccessful¹¹³

In 1923 the English language Maesydre Mission in Mold, which came under the auspices of Ebenezer, Mold, applied for support from the BUGB sustentation scheme. J.H. Shakespeare replied in September that not only was the mission not in membership with the BUGB but ‘I understand that when the application was put in, the mission had not severed itself from the parent church.’¹¹⁴ Ebenezer belonged to the BUW and was principally Welsh-speaking, however as Table 20 shows, Maesydre Mission was

¹⁰⁸ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, joint memorandum from L & C and DFM assocs., c.1962.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Ibid..

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ This issue is considered separately, See pp. 296-302.

¹¹⁴ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from J.H. Shakespeare to Rev. H.R. Thomas, minister of Ebenezer, Mold, dated 21 Sept, 1923.

affiliated to the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of BUGB. In September 1958 the mission approached the Lancashire and Cheshire Association for financial help about a problem with the roof. The subsequent correspondence illustrated a confusion resulting from a weakening of associating. Ebenezer's connection with the NWEBU had waned and the mission, although an English language daughter church, had been drawn into the BUW connections despite their technical membership of the BUGB. It was the first communication in the ten years Hubert Watson had been Area Superintendent. His reply centred on the essence of association. 'You ask why your church joined the association and I suppose the answer would be that our churches join together for mutual help and service.'¹¹⁵

In January and February 1928 the new church in the mining village of Llay held one English service each Sunday, but in March voted unanimously to become an English cause for a three month trial after which the church decided to continue its services in English but remained within the DFM association.¹¹⁶ In March 1943, the NWEBU secretary invited Llay to join the English union, a move that can be linked to the NWEBU executive of 9 April which considered the formation of a Wrexham area Baptist circuit. It is possible finance was as much a motivation as language. Rev. Vaughan Morris, the NWEBU secretary, explained to the August deacons' meeting that there would be no point in joining the English union unless it was extended to the Lancashire and Cheshire association in order to join the sustentation fund. The September church meeting decided to remain with the DFM association as they were not eligible for sustentation fund assistance with a part time pastor.¹¹⁷ However in May 1945 Llay requested membership of the NWEBU because 'the church was now wholly English in language and unable any longer to share in the life of the DFM.'¹¹⁸ It was welcomed to the NWEBU at the half yearly meeting at Rhyl,¹¹⁹ and received into the Lancashire and Cheshire association at

¹¹⁵ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter Hubert Watson to J.D. Evans of Mold, 17 March, 1958.

¹¹⁶ D. Young, 'Bethel: the story of our church', unpublished MS., c.1980. No page nos.

¹¹⁷ Llay Baptist Church minute book

¹¹⁸ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU minute book, 1937-70.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

the annual meeting at Nelson in June 1948.¹²⁰

Shotton Baptist church dates its beginning in 1908 as a Welsh church, but the church meeting of 1 November 1931 decided to 'hold the services in English after this date,'¹²¹ because there were 'several English-speaking Baptists residing in the area.'¹²² Two years later the church agreed to affiliate to the Lancashire and Cheshire association instead of the DFM.¹²³

In terms of language Wrexham town is generally recognized as predominantly English, which was not the case for some of the outlying areas. The Moss valley had a substantial Welsh-speaking community. J.W. Hudson, the Salem Newydd secretary, wrote to Herbert Motley in April 1939 about the possibility of a joint pastorate with Lodge adding 'it was also desired that a man who understands the Welsh language, would be the most suitable for this district where much Welsh is spoken.'¹²⁴ The same sentiment had been expressed at Penrallt, Bangor, at their October church meeting in 1930, that 'for the convenience and comfort of the new minister he ought to be Welsh-speaking.'¹²⁵ Their comment reflected the linguistic ambience of north west Wales.

From 1945-56 Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, wrestled with the issue of their membership with the DFM association. In December 1945 the church meeting decided not to send delegates to the half yearly meetings DFM meetings in Rhyl 'owing to the business being held in Welsh.'¹²⁶ In February 1947, in response to an appeal from the DFM association for payment of their affiliation fee, the church meeting 'agreed that we do not benefit from this association so there is no point in supporting it.'¹²⁷ The matter was 'left on the

¹²⁰ Llay Baptist Church minute book.

¹²¹ Shotton Baptist Church chapel minute book, 1 November 1931,

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid, March 1933.

¹²⁴ North West Baptist Assoc archives, letter from Salem Newydd to H. Motley, 23 February 1939.

¹²⁵ Penrallt Baptist Church Bangor, Minute book..

¹²⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/8, Ebenezer Cefn Mawr, minute book.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

table,¹²⁸ but was rescinded at the April church meeting in 1948 by the five members present who felt in view of help given in recent years it would be 'wise and more honourable'¹²⁹ to pay the fees to the DFM, even though negotiations were taking place with the Lancashire and Cheshire association for support from the sustentation fund. Bethania, Leeswood, made a similar decision when it joined the BUGB in 2001. Having benefited from an interest free loan of £20,000 from the BUW in the 1980s the members felt honour bound to have dual membership despite the loan having been fully repaid.

During 1951 Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, was in correspondence with a Rev. Morris of Ipswich as a possible pastor. One of the letters refers to the 'non-amalgamation'¹³⁰ with the Welsh-speaking church at Cefnbychan. For Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, the parting of the ways with the BUW occurred in 1955. The September church meeting had been informed that their grant from the BUGB Home Work Fund, the sustentation fund in a new guise, would be approved if Ebenezer increased its contribution by £20. The church had also received a letter from the BUW asking for their subscription. The meeting 'felt we would not pay this as we are not obliged to do so,'¹³¹ followed by the significant comment that the church was 'already attending our own union,'¹³² and would therefore write to the BUW requesting the church be removed from their list of members. The following year the church meeting decided not to continue paying the subscription to the DFM association because they were 'playing their part in the Home Mission Fund of the BUGB.'¹³³

Bilingual cooperation was a possibility in Cefn Mawr during the early 1950s. A large scale local authority housing development connected with industrial expansion at Monsanto and other factories was under construction. The estimated influx of population

128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.

was about two thousand.¹³⁴ The nearest Baptist church was Bethel ‘about a quarter of an hour’s walk away.’¹³⁵ In T.J. Morgan’s opinion ‘the class of people in some of the houses certainly need a place of worship.’¹³⁶ Wrexham Rural District Council suggested ‘spare land adjoining and situate at the end of Heol Berwyn, Cefn Mawr,’¹³⁷ but on inspection Hubert Watson was ‘not very impressed.’¹³⁸ He wondered whether the deacons of Bethel and Ebenezer could find an alternative site. Watson had written to R.T. Evans, the secretary of the BUW, suggesting as the Welsh church was within reach of the new estate there did not seem much point in spending ‘anything up to £2000 - £3000 on land and buildings,’¹³⁹ and wondered whether ‘the friends attached to your church would feel capable of seizing this new opportunity.’¹⁴⁰ An alternative would be whether ‘some arrangement could be made whereby your premises were used to this end.’¹⁴¹

R.T. Evans forwarded Watson’s letter to Boaz Williams, the DFM secretary, who wrote to Hubert Watson in a very matter of fact manner suggesting the best he could do was to ‘place your letter before the executive committee after which I will convey to you the feelings expressed and any decision come to.’¹⁴² His letter does not convey a sense of exhilaration at a God-sent opportunity for major evangelism in the district. Watson reiterated the English consensus ‘that further building work is unnecessary,’¹⁴³ but there should be ‘a more determined effort to reach the new people who are settling on the estate.’¹⁴⁴ No further progress was made.

The ministers and deacons of the Wrexham area churches met frequently during 1955.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from T.J. Morgan to H. Watson, 5 May 1951.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from Clerk of Wrexham R.U.D.C. to Morgan Jones, 15 November 1951.

¹³⁸ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from H. Watson to E. Wood, 23 November 1951.

¹³⁹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from H. Watson to R.T. Evans, 23 November 1951.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from B. Williams to H. Watson, 26 November 1951.

¹⁴³ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from H. Watson to B. Williams, 21 April 1952.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

During lengthy discussions at the meeting of 12 October 1955 the possibility of grouping Welsh and English churches was suggested. It was pointed out that ‘the Welsh language barrier arose, and the fear on the part of the Welsh churches that the young people might be led into fellowship with the English-speaking churches.’¹⁴⁵

Negotiations involving the Flintshire churches were much less extensive. In October 1963 the NWEBU secretary reported to the half yearly meeting conversations regarding the possibility of a joint pastorate between representatives of the Welsh churches at Lixwm, Treuddyn and Mold with the English churches at Shotton and Buckley,¹⁴⁶ but nothing developed from them. In 1977 Trevor Hubbard reported to the NWEBU half yearly meeting that he had been approached by the Welsh church at Lixwm who wondered whether the English Baptists might take it over and had enquired if there was any interest. Terry Bartlam of the Rhos/Cefn fellowship suggested Hubbard contact Norman Harries of Holywell but the eventual answer was that there was ‘no prospect of this being taken over for an English work.’¹⁴⁷

Bethel, Holywell, has never been in membership with the NWEBU, but the possibility of a joint pastorate with Flint was briefly considered in 1950. Norman Harries, who was lay pastor in the early 1970s, has given an interesting insight into a small church struggling to come to terms with anglicisation. He preached in English on alternate Sundays. On other Sundays there might be Welsh speakers and a Welsh service, but there was no policy of linguistic alternation. ‘This was far from satisfactory as visitors and newcomers did not know what to expect.’¹⁴⁸

Harries’ comments also reflect the culture of a small Welsh chapel which was ‘a BUW church and maintained the procedures of such a church.’¹⁴⁹ He was told ‘once a deacon

¹⁴⁵ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, minutes of Wrexham area ministers and deacons’ meeting 12 October 1955.

¹⁴⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU minute book, 1937-70.

¹⁴⁷ NWEBU Minute Book, 1971 – 2008.

¹⁴⁸ Personal undated letter from N. Harries June 2009, received 15 June 2009.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

always a deacon,¹⁵⁰ and recounts an occasion when a non-Welsh-speaking deacon from a Welsh Baptist church on the Wirral arrived one Sunday evening:

I was calmly told by the church secretary before the service I was not preaching that evening, that we were going to appoint Mr. D to our diaconate – no church approval was sought.¹⁵¹

In seven years of involvement ‘we never had a church business meeting.’¹⁵² Nor were the accounts presented to the church. On one occasion he suggested that there should be a church meeting to which the secretary replied ‘the deacons will decide when there will be a church meeting.’¹⁵³ Eventually Harries had a discussion with the BUW ‘but they didn’t want to see the use of the Welsh language hindered.’ He contacted the Lancashire and Cheshire association of the BUGB ‘thinking we might do better with them.’¹⁵⁴ However ‘the atmosphere was such that it would have been like throwing a red rag to a bull and so I dropped the idea.’

John Chester, a member of Bethel when Norman Harries was lay pastor, presents a complementary picture. ‘The church had at one time been a thriving Welsh language church but by the 1970s was in rapid and serious decline.’¹⁵⁵ Norman Harries and a significant number of the congregation were not Welsh speakers however ‘the language of the services was a big issue for a small number of influential people who ...gave Norman Harries a hard time. He was very gracious and showed understanding and tact but really never had the support of the whole church ... There were more sad people than glad people when he decided to give up the lay pastorate.’¹⁵⁶

Some of the small English-speaking churches in the Wrexham area may have had their church meetings, elected deacons for a term of office, presented the accounts and minuted their meetings. Yet in their own way they became similarly fossilized in their traditions

150 Ibid.

151 Ibid

152 Ibid

153 Ibid

154 Ibid

155 E-mail from John Chester received 3 July 2009.

156 Ibid

and lost the spirit of being church in a similar manner to Holywell.

The Wrexham negotiations 1962-3

The most significant language event was the negotiations between Chester Street and the Welsh church at Penybryn between April 1962 and October 1963 regarding the sharing of a bilingual pastor. Norman Jones' earlier efforts in liaising with the DFM association suggest that there may have been an impetus behind the scenes. However it would appear from the Chester Street minutes that the approach to Penybryn arose from a concern about whether the church could afford the cost of having its own minister.

A special deacons' meeting on 11 November 1960 discussed a decline in 'the faithful members'¹⁵⁷ and that 'the active membership was considerably smaller than the nominal membership.'¹⁵⁸ The meeting resolved that 'the treasurer prepare a fuller statement to show how the church would meet the requirements of a pastorate.'¹⁵⁹ Within that context the meeting then agreed that the secretary contact Penybryn 'to discuss in a preliminary way the possibility of a joint pastorate.'¹⁶⁰ However on 5 December Maelor Griffiths, the church secretary, informed the church meeting that the Penybryn secretary 'had expressed the view that cooperation between the two churches was unlikely.'¹⁶¹ Some members were in favour of making a more formal overture to Penybryn, whilst others did not support the idea of a shared ministry. The church did not pursue the matter and agreed that the primary requirement was to increase income by circulating an appeal to members. Throughout 1961 the deacons' and church meeting minutes reveal the church's preoccupation with the viability of its finances for the support of a pastor.

¹⁵⁷ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book, 1956-63.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

The church meeting of 27 March 1962 endorsed the deacons' recommendation that a further approach be made to Penybryn. The first discussions with the Welsh church were held on 6 April when six of the Penybryn deacons attended the first meeting. Maelor Griffiths outlined the possibilities and acted as committee secretary. The fundamental principle was that a joint pastorate should not encroach on the independence of either church but could offer a solution to common problems. Chester Street had resolved to take immediate steps to call a pastor, but if a joint pastorate became available an invitation could be extended to a pastor of 'good qualifications and successful experience.'¹⁶² Amongst the points discussed were the requirements of the two smaller churches, Bradley Road with Chester Street, and Gardden Road with Penybryn. The Chester Street deacons thought the provision of pastoral care for Bradley Road could be left in their hands as a domestic matter which would not encroach on the reasonable service Penybryn may expect of a pastor.'¹⁶³ An agreeable financial arrangement would be needed as Penybryn might not be able to contribute an equal amount. Some expressed the view that 'equality of contribution might be regarded as equality of effort rather than exact equality of figures.'¹⁶⁴ The meeting recognized difficulties might arise such as the pastor's liberty to attend English and Welsh denominational assemblies therefore 'such matters would need to be approached in a suitably Christian way.'¹⁶⁵

At the second meeting eight Penybryn members attended and after lengthy discussion reached agreement on several points. The salary would be £700p.a. including national insurance contributions. Chester Street would contribute £400 and Penybryn £300. The manse would be provided by Chester Street with an annual value of £50. The pastor would service two Sundays per month in each church with the extra Sunday in a five Sunday month being spent with Penybryn. As negotiations progressed the fifth Sunday reverted to Chester Street and became part of the contention that ultimately sabotaged the project. Week night arrangements were deferred. Both churches would have equal

¹⁶² Ibid.
¹⁶³ Ibid.
¹⁶⁴ Ibid.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

responsibility in the choice of a pastor. Bradley Road and Gardden Road would be provided for but no details were made at this stage how that would be accommodated.¹⁶⁶

Ten Penybryn representatives attended the third joint meeting. Chester Street suggested each church pay a quarter of the national insurance and the pastor a half, and at some future point help might be needed from Penybryn with the upkeep of the manse. Penybryn agreed to consider any request sympathetically. Communion would be celebrated on the first Sunday in Chester Street and the second in Penybryn. Evening meetings would be at Penybryn on Tuesdays and Chester Street on Wednesdays. It was suggested M.J. Williams, general secretary of the BUW, Norman Jones of the Lancashire and Cheshire association and L.E. Valentine of the DFM association be consulted.¹⁶⁷

The fourth joint meeting on 27 July confirmed the existing committee should remain in office with John Owen from Penybryn as chairman and Harold Davies of Chester Street as vice-chair. It was agreed that each church should strictly adhere to the Sunday arrangements, apart from exceptional circumstances 'to avoid the minister being away too often.'¹⁶⁸ The provision of a joint bank account was deferred. G.V. Price raised the question of arrangements for bringing the pastorate to a close but no conclusion was reached. Nine ministers' names were put forward, four of whom were to be considered first, but the denominational representatives should be seen prior to any arrangements being made.

M.J. Williams, attended the seventh joint meeting on 5 November 1962, commenting 'he had never attended a meeting exactly similar to this,'¹⁶⁹ adding 'there was a serious shortage of ministers and in many cases the only satisfactory solution lay in grouping churches under one pastor.'¹⁷⁰ At this stage of the negotiations Chester Street were expressing optimism. The church magazine for February 1963 included a report for the

166 Ibid.
167 Ibid .
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.

annual general meeting which expressed the view that ‘many aspects of the idea were discussed in great detail and with complete frankness and the representatives of both churches have from the start found it very easy to negotiate in a way that shows much christian spirit and augurs well for the future.’¹⁷¹

At the ninth meeting on 18 April 1963 it was agreed to invite Revs. John Rice Rowlands and T.J. Russell Jones to preach at both churches. By the tenth meeting on 7 June J. Rice Rowlands had written that he ‘would not be prepared to accept the pastorate of an English church.’¹⁷² His comment was not anti-English but a reflection of his priority. Reflecting on his decision he wrote ‘I had a conviction and continue to believe that my calling was to minister to churches worshipping in Welsh and to foster the distinctive manifestation of Christianity in Welsh as part of the variety of witness within mankind to God in Christ.’¹⁷³ T.J. Russell Jones impressed both churches and it was agreed he be invited to consider the post. On 9 June a special church meeting at Chester Street with forty members unanimously endorsed the recommendation to call him. ‘He gave the call the very greatest attention and came to Wrexham to talk with members of the committee. Later he intimated that he did not see his way clear to accepting the invitation.’¹⁷⁴ Reflecting on the decision forty-seven years later, he sensed the relationship between the two churches was not as stable as it appeared.¹⁷⁵

Under the terms of the call Russell Jones would have pastoral charge of both churches, ministering at Chester Street on the first, third and fifth Sundays with communion celebrated on the first Sunday. Penybryn would be covered on the second and fourth Sundays with communion on the fourth. Midweek meetings would be at Penybryn on Tuesdays, Chester Street on Wednesdays. Attendance at Sunday school and other meetings would be discretionary. Two holiday Sundays would be allowed from each church but the minister would be responsible for arranging pulpit cover. The manse

¹⁷¹ Church magazine, Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, February 1963.

¹⁷² Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book, 1956-63.

¹⁷³ Personal letter from Rev. J. Rice Rowlands 28 April 2009.

¹⁷⁴ Chester Street Wrexham, church magazine, February 1964.

¹⁷⁵ Telephone response on 5 May 2009 to a letter written to T.J. Russell-Jones on 24 April 2009.

would be rent free with the churches paying the rates, however after an initial period the minister would be responsible for internal decoration. The salary would be £700 per annum with the churches paying half of the national insurance costs. A lengthy discussion took place regarding Chester Street allocating some of their Sundays for Bradley Road, and Penybryn making arrangements for Gardden Road. The eleven Penybryn representatives indicated whilst they knew this their members were unaware, therefore the arrangements should not form one of the conditions of the call. No mention of Bradley Road was to be made until the call had been accepted. The Chester Street deacons undertook to take soundings at Bradley Road.

A special church meeting was held in Chester Street on 25 June at which fifteen of its members were present, six from Bradley Road and a representative from Penybryn. Russell Jones was yet to be invited because of an 'unforeseen difficulty.'¹⁷⁶ Penybryn could not agree to the inclusion of Bradley Road in the terms of the call. Maelor Griffiths reported that all the joint committee members had known Chester Street intended making provision for Bradley Road without prejudice to the interests of Penybryn. This was not in dispute, but the Penybryn membership had not been informed because of their committee representatives insistence Bradley Road must not be mentioned in the terms of the call. Mr. R.H. Jones of Bradley Road agreed to change the terms, but the Chester Street deacons insisted they were not empowered to alter the decision of their church meeting. Chester Street and Bradley Road members expressed strong opinions that the link between their two churches should not be broken, some Bradley Road members adding they would not wish to spoil relations between Chester Street and Penybryn. The two English churches proposed the terms of the call be not changed.

From this point the project began to unravel. The Chester Street deacons' meeting of 4 July was also attended by J. Owen, E. Thomas and W. Roberts from Penybryn and R.H. Jones from Bradley Road. J. Owen believed the phrase 'To have charge of the work at Bradley Road' suggested a larger commitment than Penybryn envisaged for Chester

¹⁷⁶ Chester Street Baptist Church Wrexham, minute book, 1956-63.

Street. Whilst the Penybryn representatives suggested the fifth Sunday be allocated for Bradley Road, they thought Chester Street were not necessarily thinking of the fifth Sunday alone for Bradley Road, but would not agree to a change of wording. The Chester Street response was they would need to meet with Bradley Road and the minister to clarify the issue, until then they could not be specific. The Penybryn members asked if the inclusion of Bradley Road made it a three church call, and would a minister feel drawn to give more time to one church or language more than another? Nothing should impair the time and service allotted to Penybryn. For these reasons it should be put to the Penybryn members that arrangements would be made by Chester Street to have charge of the work at Bradley Road.

At the twelfth joint meeting on 12 July the eight Penybryn representatives insisted the wording 'to have charge at Bradley Road' was unacceptable to their membership who had no prior knowledge of Chester Street's intentions. Maelor Griffiths referred to the original minutes and expressed the view that Chester Street's concern had always been for pastoral care at Bradley Road rather than specific times and services.

The thirteenth meeting on 7 October proved to be the last. The minutes do not record how many Penybryn representatives attended, but their remarks indicated Penybryn was back tracking. W. Roberts queried whether the stipend was as attractive as had been expected, whether ministry at two churches was too onerous an undertaking and whether Welsh and English ministries made it too difficult a proposition. The Chester Street representatives stated their church should be allowed to express its views at a church meeting. Maelor Griffiths indicated his frustration by indicating that he wished to relinquish his duties, and if there was to be another joint meeting a new secretary would be required. The Chester Street deacons' at their meeting on 11 October, agreed to recommend the abandonment of the joint pastorate and that steps be taken to find their own pastor. The 1964 report for the annual general meeting which appeared in the February edition of the church magazine gave a diplomatic summary of the negotiations. It expressed disappointment at the lack of progress in the joint pastorate committee

which did not reflect the amount of work that had been undertaken. Without mentioning his name, it referred to the emergence of difficulties in the wording of the terms of the call to T.J. Russell Jones and, in conclusion, expressed the hope that despite the recommendation not to proceed with the negotiations, that at some other time the two churches might be of service to each other.¹⁷⁷

Key questions arise about the failure of what would have been a radical step forward. Given that Gardden Road did not appear as a problem to Chester Street was Bradley Road part of a hidden agenda of reluctance on the part of Penybryn? M.J. Williams was not invited until the seventh meeting. Should he and Norman Jones have been invited sooner and acted as joint moderators, although that could have risked an accusation of interfering with the independence of the local churches. Speaking some three years later at the NWEBU annual meetings in Ebenezer Cefn Mawr, Norman Jones referred to an encouraging response from a number of churches regarding group pastorates adding 'we should not allow our independence as an individual church to obscure the larger and more urgent claim of the church as a whole.' Whilst his remark was not made in the context of bilingual arrangements, it is difficult to imagine he did not have them in mind.

In 1972 Trevor Hubbard referred to relations between the NWEBU and the BUW particularly in north east Wales in a historical rather than contemporary context of ministerial oversight, reflecting 'things were no better in the Welsh-speaking churches.'¹⁷⁸ The way forward should be through the formation of ministerial teams and church groupings for which a close relationship with the BUW needed to be activated. However six months later at the annual meetings in Ponciau on 4 April 1973 he indicated that the Welsh churches 'were not ready to integrate their ministry with ours, but we have the same attitude displayed among our English-speaking churches.'¹⁷⁹ If that was the reality of the mid-1970s the earlier negotiations between Chester Street and Penybryn were premature. In contrast to the radical nature of the project, the obduracy of Penybryn

¹⁷⁷ Church magazine, Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, February 1964.

¹⁷⁸ NWEBU minute book, 1971-2008.

¹⁷⁹ NWEBU minute book, 1971-2008.

and the intransigence of Chester Street came to the fore in a relatively minor issue that indicated absence of a fundamental will to make it happen.

Associating

The practice of associating operated in several spheres of Baptist church life. The relationship between a church and the area superintendent minister was the principal link with the national body of the Baptist Union and the regional body of the local association. This sphere of association primarily involved strategic advice and guidance regarding ministerial settlement and, if appropriate, the possibility of grants from the home work/mission fund towards ministerial support. Within NWEBU associating ranged from general administration and the half-yearly gatherings, to making arrangements for the support of weaker churches. A few of the churches continued to give financial support through annual donations to the Irish union.

The July church meeting of 1926 at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, considered an appeal from the Lancashire and Cheshire association for a donation towards a target of £10,000 for a general building fund. The church had also received an appeal from the church at St. Helens. The meeting agreed that all appeals lie on the table for two years until the debt was paid on their own manse scheme.¹⁸⁰ Despite that decision the October church meeting agreed to send 15/- in response to the annual appeal from the Irish Baptist Union. It had frequently subscribed to the Irish home mission appeal during the 1920s to a far greater extent than other churches within the NWEBU. In 1922 their contribution was £1-1-0d. Penybryn, Wrexham, contributed five shillings.¹⁸¹ Chester Street, Wrexham, was a less frequent but more generous contributor. It contributed £3-3-0d in 1921,¹⁸² 10/6d in 1924,¹⁸³ but £2-2-0d in 1926¹⁸⁴ and £7-7-0d in 1931.¹⁸⁵ By the end of the 1920s

¹⁸⁰ Ruthin Record Office, ND/70/6 minute book, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.

¹⁸¹ *Irish Baptist Magazine*, Jan & Feb 1922, p.20.

¹⁸² Ibid Nov-Dec 1921, p.126.

¹⁸³ Ibid Jan – Feb 1924, p.106.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid April 1926, p.47.

Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, was not listed as a contributor but Bethel, Cefn Mawr, regularly donated of ten shillings.¹⁸⁶ The Irish Baptist Union's appreciation of Welsh geography matched that of the BUGB. Amongst its contributors for 1925 Chester Street, Wrexham, is listed under England whilst Salem, Penycae, is placed in Wrexham and listed under Wales.¹⁸⁷

Correspondence relating to Flint in 1944-5 illustrates the problem of a small church being caught between two Baptist unions in its attempt to secure ministry, as well as the strategic role of the area superintendent at national level. Flint was seeking a joint pastorate with Bagillt which belonged to the DFM and the BUW. M.E. Aubrey, the general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, wrote to Isaac Williams, the Flint secretary, on 25 July 1944 stating that churches grouping together for ministerial oversight would have to be English churches in membership with the English union. Churches in the BUW 'do not contribute to the Sustentation Fund and therefore are not able to receive its benefits.'¹⁸⁸ D. Tudwal Evans, secretary of the DFM, wrote to Herbert Motley, the Lancashire and Cheshire association secretary, on 15 March 1945 informing him that cases of churches combining from both unions 'have happened in the South Wales area, and that grants were made.'¹⁸⁹ He would be recommending the BUW make a grant of £30 to Bagillt provided the church paid £65 to the pastor. 'If both churches did alike his salary would be £190 p.a.'¹⁹⁰ The following day M.E. Aubrey wrote to Isaac Williams enclosing 'three Sustentation Schedules,'¹⁹¹ with instructions on how to complete them as he had met Tudwal Evans in London and been briefed about the situation.

M.E. Aubrey wrote to Herbert Motley on 6 April 1945 saying that 'the case you have

¹⁸⁵ *The Irish Baptist*, April 1931, p.29.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ *Irish Baptist Magazine*, April 1926, p.47.

¹⁸⁸ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from M.E. Aubrey to Isaac Williams, 25 July 1944.

¹⁸⁹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from D. Tudwal Evans to H. Motley 15 March, 1945.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ North West Baptist Association archives, letter from M.E. Aubrey to Isaac Williams, 16 March 1945.

brought before me is rather an unusual one.’¹⁹² However he retreated from the position adopted in his letter of July 1944 stating ‘there should be a possibility of a grant from the Sustentation Fund ...subject to the usual conditions.’¹⁹³ If there was the likelihood of a grant from the BUW he added, ‘I think our Committee would be prepared to be associated with the Welsh Union in a matter of this kind.’¹⁹⁴ On 1 June Tudwal Evans wrote to Herbert Motley informing him the BUW had agreed to the grant of £30 for Bagillt. ¹⁹⁵ In 1950 Flint were looking to have a combined pastorate with Holywell which was also a BUW church in the DFM association.

If the securing of joint funding from the English and Welsh unions for ministerial support was awkward, neither did mutual ministerial recognition did fit comfortably between the BUGB and the BUW. On 3 September 1941 Salem Newydd and Lodge were considering appointing Rev. Bromley, a non-collegiate minister. Herbert Motley had received a letter from the BUGB informing him Bromley had passed the second examination and would be ready to transfer to the ministerial list when he had been in pastoral office for another year. The BUGB rules required three years continuous service in one church for a non-collegiate candidate for the probationer’s list in order that the association committee and the union’s ministerial recognition committee might ‘have a fair opportunity of judging as to a man’s pastoral efficiency.’¹⁹⁶ However if Bromley moved from Painscastle to Wrexham there would be practically no break in ministerial service. This was a case in which the national body was prepared to allow an exemption for the benefit of a local church as well as the individual minister. However, on 22 September R.T. Evans, general secretary of the BUW, wrote expressing his opinion to Motley that:

In my view it illustrates a lack of real co-operation between the two unions at this time. The bureaucracy regarding recognition of non-collegiate ministers was not user-friendly either in terms of the Union’s attitudes or the time required to become a probationer.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² North West Baptist Association archives, letter from M.E. Aubrey to H. Motley, 16 April 1945.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ North West Baptist Association archives, letter from D. Tudwal Evans to H. Motley, 1 June 1945.

¹⁹⁶ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from E. Winnard to H. Motley 3 September, 1941.

¹⁹⁷ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from R.T. Evans to H. Motley, 22 September 1941

There is still a lack of formal ministerial recognition between BUGB and the BUW.

Normally accreditation is with the union of the church in which the minister is serving. A few have joint accreditation. A BUW minister moving to a BUGB church would need to apply for BUGB recognition and go before the Ministerial Recognition Committee (MRC). A BUGB minister moving to a BUW church would equally apply and go before the BUW Ministry Board.¹⁹⁸

Associating from a church's perspective is seen in the short-lived history of Llysfaen Free Church near Colwyn Bay which began in 1952 with the arrival of William Shaw. He had retired to North Wales from Crewe or Nantwich where he had been in business, possibly shoe manufacturing,¹⁹⁹ and serving as a lay pastor at Wheelock Heath from 1946-52.²⁰⁰ He bought a house in Llysfaen, a mainly Welsh-speaking community, and became a member at Old Colwyn. He started a Free Church for English-speaking people in the village which met in Tabor Welsh Baptist chapel 'in the afternoon after their Sunday school – probably 3.45 or 4.00pm.'²⁰¹ After the death of his wife he left the district. Eifion Morgan-Wynne assumed the cause folded after his departure.²⁰² Llysfaen appears in the returns of the mid-1950s, as in table 17 for 1955 but is not included in the figures for 1960 as shown in table 18.

There was correspondence between Shaw and Hubert Watson, the Lancashire and Cheshire Area Superintendant, during October 1954. Shaw suggested it might be helpful to point out the advantages of belonging to the BUGB and requested a meeting to discuss the matter as the cause was growing. 'There were thirty nine last Sunday and thirty plus stayed for communion. The preceding Wednesday the church was filled for harvest.'²⁰³ Watson wrote to Vaughan Morris, the NWEBU secretary and minister at Old Colwyn, suggesting they discussed the matter at the next NWEBU meeting prior to their visiting

¹⁹⁸ N. Bradshaw, 'South Wales Baptist Association and Baptist Union of Wales; the Present Situation and Exploring Ways Forward,' paper presented to the Joint Consultative Council of Baptists in Wales, April 2010, p.3

¹⁹⁹ Personal letter from J.Eifion Morgan-Wynne, 1 August 2006

²⁰⁰ *B.U.G.B. Handbook* for 1955, p.293.

²⁰¹ Personal letter from J.Eifion Morgan-Wynne, 1 August 2006.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ North West Baptist Association archives, letter from W.S. Shaw to H. Watson, 15 October 1954.

Llysfaen and possibly making a recommendation to the NWEBU.²⁰⁴ William Shaw addressed the NWEBU executive committee at their special meeting on 4 June 1954.²⁰⁵ However the annual meeting of the NWEBU for 1955 was informed that the members had been unable to agree on the formation of an open membership Baptist Church.²⁰⁶ It was suggested at a deacons' meeting at Union church, Colwyn Bay, that Llysfaen, given its general free church composition, should have a closer connection with Union and that perhaps two or three Llysfaen members could be invited to their next deacons' meeting.²⁰⁷ Whilst Llysfaen never joined the NWEBU, William Shaw faithfully attended its meetings on a personal basis and became president for 1958.²⁰⁸

Churches contacted the area superintendent on many occasions. Whilst such contact was most frequently in connection with the search for and appointment of ministers, Penrallt, Bangor, consulted with Hector Thomas in 1923-4 regarding open communion.²⁰⁹ In 1926-27, during consultations with J.M.D. Robertson regarding the appointment of a new minister, he reminded the church that he would not send anyone else to preach with a view until it had made its mind up about Mr. Dann, enforcing the principle that each candidate should be considered individually.²¹⁰ Robertson had cause to rebuke Penrallt in 1930 when it was again seeking a minister. He was disappointed that there was no special effort for the sustentation fund. His message was that without contributions support would not be forthcoming.²¹¹ In 1943 Penrallt sought advice from Herbert Motley when Talfryn Davies was accepted as a chaplain in the forces. Davies' original intention was to resign but the advice from Motley was to apply for leave of absence which was deemed to be in the best interest of the church. Motley also advised leave of absence would be granted on the understanding the church was 'free to secure a minister

²⁰⁴ North West Baptist Association archives, letter from H. Watson to V. Morris, 28 October 1954.

²⁰⁵ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU, minute book 1937-70.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3 Union Church, Colwyn Bay, deacons' minute book.

²⁰⁸ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU minute book, 1937-70.

²⁰⁹ Penrallt Baptist Church Bangor, minutes of deacons' meeting 26 December 1923.

²¹⁰ Penrallt Baptist Church Bangor, minutes of church meeting 13 July 1926.

²¹¹ Ibid, 11 November 1930.

if it so desire,²¹² and Mrs. Davies be allowed rent free occupation of the manse. A follow-up occurred in 1947 when the annual meeting decided to ask Herbert Motley whether 'any chaplains were available to preach with a view.'²¹³

The value of associating is very clearly illustrated in the home work and home mission applications by Penrallt, Bangor. The detailed returns shown in Table 3 include attendances at communion as well as morning and evening services. The church never had a large membership but its location in the middle of the university area of the city gave it a strategic importance for mission far beyond the size of its membership. Many of the recorded baptisms were of students. At least nine students experienced the call to Baptist ministry, including P.D. Manson who was elected president of the BUGB in 2004. Others responded to the call of God for ministry in other denominations or the mission field.

Llay did not have their own premises for many years and consulted with three consecutive area superintendents. Trevor Hubbard was able to negotiate an agreement with the Presbyterians under the Sharing of Churches Act of 1969 using as an example Baptists and Methodists sharing in Ramsbottom.²¹⁴ The Baptists sought to buy the building in the early 1980s. The annual meeting of 1984 was informed that the presbytery was prepared to rent on a ten year lease, however the building was finally bought for £9250 in January 1984.²¹⁵

Associating in which the initiative came from the church, is clearly seen in the frequent interventions of successive area superintendents at Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay. In May 1965 the diaconate met with Norman Jones for advice about the pastorate when Leonard Moseley, who had been lay pastor since the breakaway from Union church, eventually retired. Amongst various suggestions, the 'most likely prospect'²¹⁶ was for Alun Petty to

²¹² Ibid, 4 April 1943.

²¹³ Ibid, 18 March 1947

²¹⁴ Llay Baptist Church minute book 26 January 1972.

²¹⁵ Llay Baptist Church archives.

²¹⁶ Princes Drive Colwyn Bay, deacons' minute book, 28 May 1965.

become pastor of both Old Colwyn and Princes Drive. Norman Jones had discussed the idea with Petty who was open-minded about it. Moseley also discussed the possibility with Petty and was astounded to learn Norman Jones had broached the topic in a letter to the Old Colwyn secretary,²¹⁷ which he regarded as a breach of confidence. The Old Colwyn diaconate decided that the project was not feasible believing Petty had enough to do within Old Colwyn. Norman Jones asked Old Colwyn to reconsider but to no avail. At their August meeting the Princes Drive diaconate asked their secretary to write to Norman Jones to call off further talks with Old Colwyn believing 'God would raise up the man of his choice when the time comes'.²¹⁸ In July 1967 the diaconate considered names supplied by Norman Jones. A Spurgeon's student had been mentioned, but they felt because the church consisted of middle-aged and elderly people an older minister was required.²¹⁹ This attitude resurfaced during the bitter controversy relating to Peter Radford's ministry in the early 1980s.

During 1970 there was a painful dispute between the then minister, Douglas Allingham, and Leonard Moseley concerning the role the former pastor should play in a forthcoming wedding. It became personal and the Moseleys began to worship at Llandudno. A.C. Phillips of Llandudno, and Alwyn Lake-Thomas of Union church both intervened but supported Allingham's position. Their involvement illustrated an aspect of associating between churches. The February church meeting expressed confidence in Allingham but also suggested that he contact Moseley with a view to reconciliation.²²⁰ Moseley informed the secretary he was glad the outcome was 'satisfactory', but with regard to some reactions to our 'innocent participation' in certain matters, they decided to be conspicuous by their absence. The deacons decided that a deputation to Moseley which would include Norman Jones was 'inadvisable', and that the Moseleys should be transferred to the non-active members list. Later that year Allingham accepted a call to Wolverhampton.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 23 July 1965.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 20 August 1965.

²¹⁹ Princes Drive Church meeting minute book, 26 July 1967.

²²⁰ Ibid, 2 February 1970.

Alwyn Lake-Thomas' offer to act as moderator was accepted, which was both an indication that relations with Union church had improved, and a further example of practical local associating between neighbouring churches. The December church meeting was informed that the diaconate had met with Norman Jones who told them because of 'difficult financial problems which faced the denomination'²²¹ the church could not expect help from the Home Work Fund because its priority was directed at 'new and populous areas.'²²² Jones' advice was to consider a lay pastor, a minister approaching sixty-five who could be invited for a term not exceeding five years, or a student pastor from Bangor Baptist college. The church opted for a retirement pastorate which resulted in a call to Rev. W.H. Jones who, in the course of a long ministry, had served in several churches. His final appointment had been at Penrallt, Bangor, where through his effective ministry several of the many students who attended had offered themselves for ministry or the mission field.

When W.H. Jones relinquished the pastorate in September 1975 the church again sought help from the area superintendent. The annual meeting for 1976 was given the report of a meeting with Llandudno chaired by Trevor Hubbard, who was now the area superintendent, regarding a shared ministry. The costs to both churches were put at £1000 per annum.²²³ Later that month Margaret Bennet, the Llandudno secretary, wrote saying that the church could not proceed 'because of the financial situation,'²²⁴ but would review the possibility in the autumn. A special church meeting at Princes Drive on 5 April welcomed Llandudno's decision, and decided by twenty four votes to one to proceed on their own.

In September the church called Peter Radford by a majority of forty-two to one.²²⁵ His arrival resulted in five years of intense controversy and drastic transformation. The major

²²¹ Ibid, 16 December 1970.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid, 3 March 1976.

²²⁴ Letter from Margaret Bennet to Princes Drive, 18 March 1970.

²²⁵ Princes Drive Colwyn Bay, Church meeting 29 September 1976.

areas of dispute centred round Radford's personality, reactions to change and theological emphasis. Radford's time at Princes Drive illustrated both the trauma a church could experience when its traditional worship and methods faced what was then regarded as the radical requirements of charismatic renewal, as well as the interventionist role of an area superintendent at the request of the diaconate. Whilst the controversy clearly lay between the church and its minister, it was played out in the context of the relationship between both diaconate and minister with the area superintendent, and is another example of issues being intertwined.

Reflective conversations with two people who belonged to Princes Drive at the time succinctly summarized the situation. There was a clash of culture, personality and ecclesiology. Radford was an inner city Londoner from Tottenham. Finding himself in a middle-class church with some wealthy members gave him a sense of insecurity compounded by his not excelling in people skills. Nonetheless he was a very humble man who allowed people to do things.²²⁶ He was also a 'very laid-back character' which probably enabled him to endure conflict for as long as he did.²²⁷ Two key protagonists were business men accustomed to getting things done with executive efficiency. One of whom was a retired business consultant not long converted and unaccustomed to the bureaucratic procedures of Baptist life.²²⁸ Both men strongly vocalized the conservatism of the traditional elements of an older middle class membership who valued the formalities of church life.²²⁹ Their influence produced some joint mentoring sessions following consultations with the area superintendent. However their somewhat dictatorial attitude eventually lost the support of the membership which was not prepared to be badgered.²³⁰ Both men resigned in 1982.

Changes arose from an inextricable link between ecclesiology and theology through the

²²⁶ Conversation with P. Leavers on 13 Oct 2008, a member who became assistant pastor in Keith Foster's ministry.

²²⁷ Conversation with T. Casey on 8 August 2008, a member who had been brought up in Princes Drive.

²²⁸ Conversation with P. Leavers on 13 Oct 2008.

²²⁹ Conversation with T. Casey on 8 August 2008.

charismatic movement's influence on Radford. At the March deacons' meeting in 1977 he suggested alterations to the evening service for the coming winter which would be brought forward to 3.00pm and include open prayer, discussions, fellowship and afternoon tea. The deacons 'favourably discussed the proposals,'²³¹ and would bring them to the next church meeting, but the May church meeting deferred the matter until all the members had opportunity to express their views.²³² By the July deacons' meeting Radford, having no response from the membership, was proposing 'area devotional meetings.'²³³ Their advantages would include 'homely surroundings, minimum travelling, informality and local outreach.'²³⁴ In effect they would be house-groups. The deacons agreed in principle and placed the idea on the agenda for the next church meeting, but Radford continued to press for change. As the church was revising its constitution he requested it consider an eldership having specific interest in the spiritual welfare of members whilst the deacons oversaw administrative matters. The diaconate agreed that whilst the concept was a New Testament principle it was 'generally in keeping with the principles recently implemented in which deacons accepted responsibilities for all elements of church work.'²³⁵

By October one deacon was reflecting some negative reaction. The 'general emphasis of the church had changed to the detriment of the members ... at one time the image of the church related to caring whereas now it was preaching.'²³⁶ The deacons' decision to safeguard the caring image indicated little meeting of minds with Radford for whom pastoral care was integral to the housegroup and eldership concepts, and which are now accepted as normal practice in many churches across the denominations.

Reference was made at the December church meeting to the growth of the Sunday evening youth group which had an attendance of between twenty to forty. The format

²³⁰ Conversation with P. Leavers on 13 Oct 2008.

²³¹ Princes Drive deacons' minutes, 31 March 1977.

²³² Princes Drive church meeting minutes, 11 May 1977.

²³³ Princes Drive deacons' minutes, 7 July 1977.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid, 31 August 1977.

was prayer and praise at the beginning with gospel choruses, prayer and a time of sharing news and experiences. A message was given followed by further prayer and singing.²³⁷ Many of the young people played a part in the church brigades, but the evening was developing as a non-denominational fellowship. No word of congratulation or encouragement is found within the church minute books except for a reference to comments made at a recent NWEBU meeting on how blessed Princes Drive was to have so many active young people.²³⁸

The attitude of the diaconate was grudging. Their meeting in June 1978 referred not to the blessings of another baptismal service but the singing of a chorus that was not well known by the congregation who were therefore 'not at liberty to participate in the service.'²³⁹ One deacon felt obliged to draw Radford's attention to his timekeeping.²⁴⁰ Amongst the visiting preachers were Douglas McBain and David Pawson, both prominent advocates of charismatic renewal within churches belonging to BUGB. However the membership appeared less critical than the diaconate. Besides the emergence of charismatic people, there was a nucleus of older members who whilst not necessarily appreciating the theological aspects of what was happening, recognized that Radford's ministry was making progress. They became referred to as 'the teenage pensioners.'²⁴¹

By the time of the February deacons' meeting in 1981, to which Radford was not invited, the diaconate felt compelled to meet Trevor Hubbard to discuss 'many identified failings.'²⁴² It was, in effect, a reaction from entrenched tradition and a more liberal theology. Princes Drive had well attended Boys and Girls Brigades but Radford did not seek a prominent role in them possibly because the brigades' leader was less evangelical.²⁴³ Radford was also seeking advice from Trevor Hubbard about this time

²³⁶ Ibid, 10 October 1977.

²³⁷ Princes Drive Church meeting minutes, 14 December 1977.

²³⁸ Princes Drive deacons' meeting minutes, 8 May 1978.

²³⁹ Ibid, 5 June 1978.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid, 15 February 1981.

²⁴³ Conversation with T. Casey on 8 August 2008.

regarding the possibility of Ron Monk, then a supplementary minister at Llandudno, assisting with both the brigades and the growing youth work. Hubbard thought Monk might coordinate youth work in Llandudno, Princes Drive and Old Colwyn. Although the plan did not materialize, Monk was listed in the *BUGB Handbooks* as having been at Old Colwyn and Princes Drive from 1980 to 1982.²⁴⁴ However Geoffrey Jell, the minister of Old Colwyn at the time, does not recall such an appointment.²⁴⁵

Between 1980 and 1982 four critical events compelled the traditionalists to approach the area superintendent on several occasions. They were a letter from Radford published in the *Baptist Times* on 27 November which led to the brigades leaving Princes Drive in April 1981 for Rhos on Sea Methodist Church, the evening service on 3 October 1982 and Radford's paper in which he set out his vision for the church.

The considerable offence caused by Radford's letter to the *Baptist Times* further illustrated little meeting of minds between key figures such as the brigade leaders. He sought to expose longstanding myths such as there being no children's talks in the Bible. Jesus spoke to adults and the same practice was seen in the early church so the concept of getting children to bring their parents becomes a myth. It rarely happened in Radford's experience and gave the impression that 'Jesus is kids' stuff.'²⁴⁶ It was dangerous to think an hour a week 'inoculates them against the real thing later'²⁴⁷ because much was lost as soon as they returned home to a non-Christian environment. Churches needed to be more effective and radical in their children's organisations.

One deacon recommended, in the interests of Radford's future and to broaden his experience, that he should consider seeking another pastorate. Another, connected with both Sunday school and brigades, wrote in his letter of resignation that the 'views expressed are unbalanced and totally opposite to my own ... you will appreciate we can

²⁴⁴ *BUGB Handbook* for 1991-92, p.226, and *BUGB Directory* for 1995-96, p.230.

²⁴⁵ Telephone conversation with Rev. G.J. Jell on 7 July 2009.

²⁴⁶ *Baptist Times*, 27 November 1980, p.5.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

not work with a minister who holds such extreme views on Sunday school and brigade work.’²⁴⁸

Following the departure of the brigades to Rhos on Sea Methodist Church the diaconate received critical letters. The April deacons’ meeting registered movement in two opposing directions. Radford referred to pastoral ministry emerging through the participation of some of the members. The word ‘eldership’ was not formally mentioned but was the context of a discussion in which ‘pastoral arrangements be not formalized at this stage.’²⁴⁹ The meeting also considered criticisms expressing ‘lack of commitment’²⁵⁰ to the brigades, and commenting that young people introduced to the church in recent times, ‘are very immature in their Christian habits,’²⁵¹ whose activities were ‘both insular and relate to 95% Christian people.’²⁵² There was an indirect reference to theological differences with Radford in the comment ‘nobody has a monopoly of the truth, in Baptist churches different people have different views, so there was a need to listen and accept diversity for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.’²⁵³ Reference was made to an earlier letter from the wife of a brigade leader who commented ‘how many visitations, deputations, ultimatums does it take to get through to Peter that he is hopeless?’²⁵⁴

Whilst Sunday morning worship was traditional, evidence of two parallel groups within the church surfaced in a complaint that the evening service, which included more participation and a freer expression of worship with a congregation between fifty and sixty, only contained twenty church members.

During the second half of 1981 a monitoring group had been established on the recommendation of Trevor Hubbard following his meeting with the diaconate during the spring. A further deacons’ meeting was convened on 6 August, to which Radford was not

²⁴⁸ Princes Drive Church meeting minutes, 11 December 1980.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 9 April 1981.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

invited, to assess his performance. It considered that he had 'fundamental limitations in leadership qualities and communication ability'²⁵⁵ which could not be overcome by training action. The view was expressed that through Radford's shortcomings a form of corporate leadership had evolved. Such a statement clearly illustrated the impasse between the diaconate and Radford's cultivation of eldership principles as a means of pastoral support.

Opinions hardened during 1982, culminating with a confrontation in December that led to further resignations, the acceptance of a vision paper Radford had prepared for the church, and a *modus vivendi* that held until his move to Birmingham. Yet another deacons' meeting was held without Radford's presence, which agreed Hubbard must put Radford on the special transfer list and meet him later in the month.²⁵⁶ The diaconate also devised what was in effect a bureaucratic trap. It understood that it was BUGB policy that a first ministry should not exceed five years, so Radford would be urged to make a voluntary statement to the church meeting of his intention to move. If he was unwilling to comply, the meeting would be informed of the position with the unanimous recommendation from the diaconate that he leave by September having served over five years.²⁵⁷ Radford informed the April church meeting that he was considering a move and asked for the prayers of the members.

Matters reached a climax in October. Radford confirmed his discussions with Hubbard and suggested a special church meeting be called to consider his position. He was then asked to leave the room whilst the deacons considered the evening service of 3 October which had been conducted by Rev. Dr. Nigel Wright, then minister of Ansdell, Lytham St. Anne's, when several members had walked out. Nigel Wright wrote:

Shortly before that occasion we had received a visit at Ansdell Baptist Church (where I was) from John Wimber and a team. We had experienced a visitation of the Holy Spirit and I subsequently led various teams out from the church to

²⁵⁴ Ibid, reference to a letter to the secretary dated 2 February 1981.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Princes Drive deacons' meeting minutes, 4 April 1982.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

'impart the blessing', so to speak. I spoke at Princes' Drive and the service led into a time of ministering to people. I can understand if people were upset because I think we made a pig's ear of it and probably left Peter with a load of problems. Not an episode of which to be proud.²⁵⁸

Trevor Hubbard chaired a special church meeting on 28 October. There are no minutes in the archives, but there were vitriolic reflections at the deacons' meeting of 30 October. One of Radford's staunchest opponents considered the church meeting 'a waste of time,'²⁵⁹ possibly because he had proposed that Radford resign but found no seconder.²⁶⁰ The diaconate, now evenly split, asked Radford to produce a paper outlining the direction the church should be taking. He regarded the vote on his paper one of confidence in his leadership.²⁶¹

Whilst traditional Baptists may have viewed Radford's paper as radical, his points are now widely accepted. He believed that God was breaking through barriers of denominationalism creating a new unity across Christians of many traditions as evidenced by Spring Harvest and the Dales Bible Week. Lifestyle should be radical as presented in Ronald Sider's book *Rich Christians in an age of hunger*. Evangelism needed the fresh emphasis of Mission England, and structures should be more flexible to accommodate the church growth movement. In that context Princes Drive should be 'a worshipping people' using the best of the old but open to the new, including a place for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The church should be 'a fellowshipping people' learning to relate more closely, accepting one another through the encouragement of small groups. The church should also be an informed people. Teaching was needed on, for example, adolescence, marriage, growing old with dignity and the cults. The church should not be bound by tradition but radically sensitive to the Holy Spirit ensuring its organization did not stifle spiritual life. It should also be a healing people and a place where people know they can find their needs are met.

²⁵⁸ E-mail from Rev. Dr. N. Wright, 6 August 2008.

²⁵⁹ Princes Drive deacons' meetings minutes, 30 October 1982.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Forty-eight members, fifty-five per cent of the membership, attended a special church meeting on 16 December at which a leading opponent announced his resignation having 'lost confidence in the leadership and finding it difficult to work in a divided diaconate.'²⁶² Following discussion the proposal was carried 'that we accept the paper as a whole and our commitment to the principles contained therein'²⁶³.

A final attempt was made by the remnants of Radford's opposition at the January church meeting in 1983, but a resolution to convene another special church meeting to be chaired by Hubbard was defeated. The remaining year of Radford's ministry passed quietly and the foundation had been laid for the consolidation of Princes Drive as a charismatic Baptist church under the ministry of Keith Foster. The rise in membership is shown in table 2.

Holyhead experienced a personality clash in the mid -1940s. Whilst never as traumatic as that at Princes Drive it climaxed in a negative aspect of associating through the furtherance of a powerbase. Disagreement rose from the relationship between New Park Street and its Sunday school branch in Baker Street. Its source was a sense of power and control amongst the deacons, particularly the senior deacon Alderman D. Evans J.P., rather than constitutional arrangements. Questions relating to the administration of Baker Street were raised at the April church meeting in 1944. Alderman Evans replied Baker Street was under the jurisdiction of New Park Street, and that it did not have separate trustees. Some of them were present, but he would not disclose their names. Haydn Thomas, the minister, had stayed away from Baker Street 'purposely in order to get his position cleared'.²⁶⁴ There seemed to be some impasse between church and mission. Thomas had disregarded instructions from Baker Street 'because of the vagueness of the relationship'²⁶⁵ and wished to attend as the minister of New Park Street. Some deacons had informed S. Williams, the mission superintendent, they would not attend because

²⁶² Princes Drive Church meeting minutes, 16 December 1982.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Llangefni Records Office, WM2075/15, church meeting minutes, 20 April 1944.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

services were in Welsh 'and absented themselves as a consequence.'²⁶⁶ Alderman Evans asserted that just as the church Sunday school had powers to appoint its own officers and be part of New Park Street so had the mission. The meeting agreed the diaconate consider the relationship between church and mission.²⁶⁷

The issue developed into a heated debate at an extra church meeting on 7 May. Haydn Thomas, who had only been minister since 1943, stated that he had come to a united church but was now 'encountering certain opposition.'²⁶⁸ Alderman Evans had refused to shake his hand on two successive Sundays because he objected to his having used the phrase 'the government of Baker Street mission had gone astray.'²⁶⁹ He had given an explanation to Evans and considered the matter closed. If he did not have the confidence of the church he would resign. A lively debate ensued with many calls for reconciliation 'in a Christ like way.'²⁷⁰ Alderman Evans was heavily criticized but 'withdrew his utterances immediately.'²⁷¹ When challenged he replied he had confidence in Haydn Thomas as minister and pastor, whereupon Thomas withdrew his resignation.

The July church meeting sought to clarify the situation. There was no written constitution outlining the governance of the mission and its relationship with the church, but four points from the May officers' meeting clarified matters. Selected deacons should always take their supervisory duties. Other deacons were to visit monthly. The mission was to arrange its finances as hitherto. The minister would attend whenever possible without compromising his duties at the church.

The argumentative nature of New Park Street was evidenced at the September church meeting in a discussion on the tabling of motions. It was suggested that in presenting recommendations from the officers there should be an indication of which deacons were

266 Ibid.
267 Ibid
268 Ibid, 7 May 1944.
269 Ibid.
270 Ibid.
271 Ibid.

for and against them. Haydn Thomas objected because it was 'contrary to his conception of free speech at all times,'²⁷² and would interfere with the general harmony of the church.

A consequence of the argumentative if not confrontational church meetings led to an 'exceptional church meeting' on 26 November. Haydn Thomas informed the church he had been asked to go to Bangor to meet Principal Williams Hughes of the Baptist College and Dr. H.H. Rowley 'to answer a few questions and receive brotherly advice.'²⁷³ It transpired Alderman Evans had visited both men and then asked Thomas to call on them. Thomas stated it was unexpected 'for we are quite able to deal with all matters arising in the church ourselves.'²⁷⁴ The meeting gave Haydn Thomas its 'full trust, support, and confidence.'²⁷⁵ He referred to the occasion at a special church meeting in February 1945, stating 'the Bangor meetings were irrelevant from the outset.'²⁷⁶ However he considered it was in the interest of himself and the church to accept 'lest Alderman Evans present to Dr. Rowley and Principal Hughes a prevaricated (a misspelling of prefabricated?) account of past events.'²⁷⁷ The members asked for a letter from Principal Hughes to Evans to be read, but he refused on the grounds that it was private.

Apart from the two examples at Princes Drive and Holyhead, associating within the NWEBU churches was generally positive. Whenever associating became weak it was more likely to stem from complacency or apathy rather than isolationism. Two churches left the NWEBU over issues of theological principle. Under influence from the Evangelical Movement of Wales, Bradley Road became independent from Chester Street in the 1960s and withdrew from NWEBU. Penycae withdrew in protest at BUGB involvement in the Inter-church process. Their decision led to considerable correspondence with the BUGB and the Lancashire and Cheshire association.

²⁷² Ibid, 28 September 1944.

²⁷³ Ibid, 26 November 1944.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 25 February 1945.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Penycae sought to base their case on the trust deeds:

...to permit to officiate in the said chapel such pastor or pastors holding the sole authority of the holy scriptures and that interpretation of them usually called evangelical in contradistinction to Unitarianism and Romanism.²⁷⁸

Bernard Green, General Secretary of BUGB, replied at length referring to circa seventy churches who could not agree with the BUGB's decision but who 'continue to make a valuable contribution in many ways to the vast amount of evangelistic and evangelical work going on in the denomination.'²⁷⁹ The assembly decision 'does not bind any local church.'²⁸⁰ The Welsh churches were left to make their own decision about ecumenical activity via Cytun. 'The result of their vote means we have not joined the Welsh body.'²⁸¹ The trust deed was not violated by the assembly decision. The BUGB always maintained a firm evangelical Baptist and Protestant witness. 'Whilst we recognise Christ and the Holy Spirit at work within the Roman Catholic Church we stand firmly against the Mass, prayers to Mary, the authority of the Pope, priestly absolution etc.'²⁸² Because of the strong BUGB representation along with other Free Church and evangelical groups 'we have secured a Trinitarian doctrinal basis to all new ecumenical bodies, which means that Unitarians cannot be members of them.'²⁸³

Green concluded by asking in the light of what he had written, 'is it really necessary to resign?'²⁸⁴ His appeal referred to exciting days with a church planting programme in over forty places, a large network of association missionaries and evangelists, more men and women than ever before answering the call to ministry and seven hundred churches involved in BUGB's evangelistic programme Action in Mission. He added 'surely these are the very emphases with which your church would wish to associate ...in cutting yourselves off you will be withdrawing support from work and opportunities in which the

²⁷⁸ North West Baptist assoc. archives, letter from J.G. Kellet to Gen. Sec. of BUGB, 27 March 1990,
²⁷⁹ Ibid, Letter from Bernard Green to J.G. Kellet. 12 April 1990,
²⁸⁰ Ibid,
²⁸¹ Ibid,
²⁸² Ibid,
²⁸³ Ibid,
²⁸⁴ Ibid,

hand of God is so clearly to be seen.'²⁸⁵ His final point was an affirmation that 'we are not asking you to forsake principles and convictions dear to your hearts. We fully respect you for them ...we ask you to respect our spiritual integrity and sincere desire to further our Lord's work with as much evangelical and evangelistic zeal as you.'²⁸⁶

Penycae responded in October with a letter to Trevor Hubbard, which contains a note in Hubbard's handwriting 'have referred this to Bernard Green and am seeking advice about further action,'²⁸⁷ which gives an interesting insight into the relationship between a regional representative and the national body. Penycae acknowledged Green's detailed reply which 'has been considered in full by members.'²⁸⁸ Nonetheless they were 'in total agreement the position should remain unchanged.' The church also wrote to Chris Haig, the association secretary, as their decision 'also means withdrawing from the association.'²⁸⁹ In reply Haig pointed out 'we have a number of churches which are members of the association but not members of BUGB,'²⁹⁰ and offered to meet the church with the NWEBU secretary. The correspondence closed in March 1991 with a letter from Haig regretting their decision to withdraw without 'the opportunity of discussing the matter first.'²⁹¹ Because a breach of fellowship was such an important matter 'at the very least Christian courtesy requires such an opportunity for conversation and to see whether there can be another way which is less hurtful to the Christian family and the cause of Christ.'²⁹² Intransigency won the day.

The smaller and pastorless churches

The larger coastal churches were able to sustain their own ministry, albeit from time to time with the support of the Sustentation Fund and its successors. Whilst Wrexham, Cefn

285 Ibid,
286 Ibid,
287 Ibid, letter from J.G. Kellett to T. Hubbard, 4 October 1990.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid, letter from J.G. Kellett to C. Haig. 5 October 1990.
290 Ibid, letter from C. Haig to J.G. Kellett, 12 December 1990.
291 Ibid, letter from C. Haig to J.G. Kellett, 6 March 1991.
292 Ibid.

Mawr, and Ponciau were able to have full-time ministry until the latter part of the twentieth century, sometimes with grant aid from the BUGB, the north east also had a proliferation of smaller churches. The initial consideration for grouping which centred on Buckley in 1920-21 failed to develop. The matter was then not seriously considered until 1938, but thereafter it was frequently on the agenda of the NWEBU, and the respective inland area churches. The frequent attempts at supporting these churches further illustrates the practice of associating within NWEBU and the linkage with the strategic role of the area superintendent as the representative of both the regional association and the national union. The various combinations of churches that were considered also illustrate that the local geography of north east Wales was a subsidiary factor.

In March 1938 The NWEBU executive referred to the pastorless churches as an ongoing issue in the Wrexham area. Buckley and Flint were considered for grouping as were Salem Newydd and Lodge. At the half-yearly meeting in September a plea to make progress came from Penycae. However negotiations between Penycae and Bethel, Cefn Mawr, during 1940-41 did not develop. By 1957 Groes was being 'looked after by Salem Welsh church,²⁹³ but from the 1970s chose not to be involved in grouping schemes.

A.J. Watkins of Chester Street played a strategic role as evidenced by his frequent correspondence with Herbert Motley, but Chester Street itself never showed great commitment to the group concept. Watkins informed Motley in March 1940 that he had been invited to chair the united deacons' meetings. He was a busy man but would be prepared to help on week nights sometimes.²⁹⁴ Lodge had been wavering but 'my visit has averted this.'²⁹⁵ It would be difficult to get the right man because 'Salem Newydd is composed chiefly of youth and very enthusiastic. Lodge is composed of the older element.'²⁹⁶ His observation was borne out the following July in a letter from Rev. Winnard, the NWEBU secretary, to Motley when both churches considered calling Rev.

²⁹³ North West Baptist Assoc. Archives, notes of a meeting at Chester Street, Wrexham, 19 January 1957.

²⁹⁴ North West Baptists Assoc. Archives, Salem Newydd file.

²⁹⁵ North West Baptist Assoc. Archives, letter from A.J. Watkins to H. Motley, 29 April 1940.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

Bromley. 'Salem Newydd are very keen and alive and for their sakes trying to bring Lodge to act regarding schedules ... I believe the difficulty lies with the church treasurer who is old and doesn't wish to take the trouble ...Mrs Williams of Brymbo informed us that it was not the decision of the church to wait until after the war for pastoral settlement but just the expressed wish of one man.'

In April 1940 Watkins wrote to Motley expressing concern regarding Boaz Williams who had been minister at the Welsh church in Froncysyllte. He had made 'a wonderful impression'²⁹⁷ at Lodge who had asked Salem Newydd to give him a Sunday. He was not able to find Williams' name in the list of ministers and probationers but was assured by Dr. E.K. Jones, whom he trusted, that he had been a student at Bangor Baptist College. His remark illustrated the lack of coordination between the accredited lists of the BUW and the BUGB. However, there had been trouble at Froncysyllte. Williams had resigned but continued living in the village. 'If you happen to meet Dr. E.K. Jones you might ask him about Mr. Williams. He has told me but it is too long a story to give you in a letter, but I feel there is an element of risk.'²⁹⁸ He recommended Williams 'go only as supply,'²⁹⁹ and had advised the secretary at Salem Newydd to that effect.

In August 1940 the Chester Street diaconate declined a request from Salem Newydd for Watkins to lead their communion service one Sunday each month. However to 'show a desire to assist we were willing to spare him on one Sunday in November providing they supply our pulpit,'³⁰⁰ which was hardly an equitable quid pro quo.

During 1942 Watkins suggested the inland area be formed into three geographical divisions. In the north, Buckley would be linked with Shotton and Flint, although Buckley could also be connected with Salem Newydd, Ponciau and Groes in the centre. In the south Ebenezer, and Bethel, Cefn Mawr, would be linked with Llangollen.

²⁹⁷ North West Baptist Assoc. Archives, letter from A.J. Watkins to H. Motley. 29 April 1940.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ruthin Records Office, ND/147/5 Chester Street minute book ,1940-46.

In January 1942 Watkins felt it necessary to inform Motley about T.J. Hughes who had been minister at Penybryn, the Welsh Baptist church in Wrexham, where there had been trouble, the nature of which was not disclosed, and was now working at Brymbo steel works. He had been inducted as part-time pastor at Llay, as indicated in table 15, and preached there once a month. Watkins considered him unsuitable for a group, but having accepted Llay he was unavailable. Watkins added the Lodge deacons were unanimous for calling B.J. Morgan of Holyhead. Salem Newydd also liked him, and understood Morgan had led them to believe he would consider an invitation. Given his intimate knowledge of the two churches Watkins thought it would be a wise choice

However, in the wake of their unsuccessful attempt to invite Rev. Bromley, no call was given to B.J. Morgan. During the summer of 1942 Salem Newydd and Lodge jointly called a Rev. E. Hirst for a five year period. Each church would contribute £50 p.a. towards the stipend which would be supplemented by sustentation grants. Amongst the details 'it is thought desirable that the churches be best served by alternative Sundays rather than dividing each Sunday between the churches.'³⁰¹

Hirst's declination resulted in confusion and bitterness but Watkins' sagacity appeared in a letter to Motley dated 10 October 1942. Having read all the correspondence he thought the least said the better as it would not alter events. Matters were a mess. Hirst had not written to him as he had promised. Mr. Valentine of Salem Newydd had made a critical statement, which has not survived, but Watkins implied the Salem Newydd diaconate had not heard the reasons why Hirst did not come although J.W. Hudson had been contacted individually. Possibly Valentine's criticism reflected Hudson not communicating effectively with the diaconate. There were discrepancies between what Hirst had said to Watkins and written to Motley, but Watkins was not privy to what happened between Hirst and Hudson. Watkins' conclusion was:

no doubt that things that has happened to them has happened for the best ...you

³⁰¹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, copy of terms of settlement dated 26 May 1942.

ask me what I think you had better do about it ...in short I would do this, leave matters exactly where they are as no useful purpose can now be served in anyway.

But I would keep all this correspondence it may serve as useful reference and guidance for the future.

Lodge is definitely out of it for the present and Salem Newydd upset. So I would wait for the present (at least) and let them approach me. My motto generally is 'do it now'. But there is an exception to every rule. I think this is one so I should wait and see.³⁰²

In a wry tail-piece Watkins added. 'I sometimes think the minister's job is the hardest in the world, but thank goodness I'm not a General Superintendent.'³⁰³

The 1943 April executive of the NWEBU discussed the formation of 'a circuit of certain churches in the Wrexham area.'³⁰⁴ The July executive was authorised to contact the Chester Street officers to consider the possibility of a circuit with two or three ministers that would include Wrexham.³⁰⁵ Vaughan Morris wrote to the Chester Street deacons outlining what he called 'The Wrexham Fellowship of Churches'. Its purpose was to:

view regularly the conditions, needs and prospects of the churches. To secure some degree of ministerial service in every church. To develop fellowship and arrange occasions of common witness and inspiration. To consider needs of church extension in the district and submit recommendations to the NWEBU.³⁰⁶

By December Vaughan Morris's outline had become an outlined trial scheme for twelve month's pastoral oversight involving Salem Newydd, Lodge, Buckley and Shotton with eight principal objectives:

- 1 Chester Street would release their minister for circuit duty one Sunday each month following the appointment of a second minister.
- 2 The four churches would contribute 10/- per week to a united ministries' fund. £104 p.a. will enable an application for a Sustentation Fund grant.
- 3 The minister would be either a young probationer or an older single man who would minister to each church in turn. Pastoral visits would be made to each church in the week preceding a communion service. The fourth Sunday of each month would be spent in Chester Street as cover for its minister playing his

³⁰² North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from A.J. Watkins to H. Motley, 10 October 1942.

³⁰³ Ibid

³⁰⁴ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU minute book 1937-70.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2 NWEBU minute book 1937-70.

- part.
- 4 The pulpit supply on other Sundays would be provided by lay preachers on an expenses only basis.
 - 5 The midweek meetings would be conducted by one of the two ministers.
 - 6 The fellowship council would meet every three months.
 - 7 Each church would manage its own internal affairs.
 - 8 Pending the arrival of a second minister A.J. Watkins would chair the church meetings.³⁰⁷

Negotiations progressed sufficiently for the application of a special grant from the Home Work Fund so that by June 1944 a student from Cardiff Baptist College, E.V. Wynne-Jones, had accepted the call and was ordained in Chester Street on 19 July. The NWEBU secretary reported 'the successful working of the Wrexham group'³⁰⁸ to the September executive meeting.

Watkins was also closely involved with Shotton. In October 1936 he agreed to assume pastoral oversight 'to commence in January 1937 for one year.'³⁰⁹ In effect he served until the appointment of E.V. Wynne-Jones. Vaughan Morris outlined the group ministry scheme to Shotton on 10 November 1943.³¹⁰ The church agreed to the proposal on 1 December,³¹¹ and offered a call to E.V. Wynne-Jones on 19 March 1944.³¹² Thereafter Shotton regarded itself as having two pastors as evidenced by their proposal to renovate the notice-board 'with the order of the services and names of our two pastors respectively.'³¹³

In May 1945 Motley wrote asking the Chester Street diaconate to allow Watkins to serve for a further twelve months but their refusal was unanimous. 'The church could not accede ... as the churches concerned had taken up so much of the pastor's time.'³¹⁴ The June deacons' meeting also refused a further request for Watkins 'to supervise the work

³⁰⁷ Ruthin Records Office, ND/147/5 Chester Street minute book 1940-46.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Shotton Baptist Church minute book 8 October 1936.

³¹⁰ Ibid. 10 November, 1943.

³¹¹ Ibid. 1 December, 1943.

³¹² Ibid. 19 March, 1944.

³¹³ Ibid. 26 July, 1944..

³¹⁴ Ruthin Records Office, ND/147/5 Chester Street minute book 1940-46.

of the churches for a few more months,³¹⁵ consequently Watkins terminated his connection. However at their meeting on 29 April 1946 the deacons reluctantly agreed he could chair the quarterly joint committee meetings, as it would be for twelve months only after which a fresh application would have to be made, but the grouping had lost its impetus, and in view of the impending departure of E.V. Wynne-Jones the executive committee did not proceed with their grant application for the renewal of the grant.

The Shotton archives present a participant's reflection on the group ministry. On hearing that Wynne-Jones was leaving, the opinion of a special church meeting that 'it was impossible for a minister to work four churches'³¹⁶ was conveyed to a group meeting which asked Shotton to reconsider.³¹⁷ Shotton's assessment must have been realistic because Motley wrote in November echoing their understanding that 'four churches were too much to form a group,'³¹⁸ but he had every faith in A.J. Watkins 'taking on his duties as before.'³¹⁹ However the arrangement did not materialize. The Chester Street secretary informed Shotton 'Mr. Watkins himself says he cannot undertake anymore responsibility as the three churches he now has charge of are as much as he can manage.'³²⁰ They would have been Chester Street, Bradley Road, and Holt. In April 1947 it was decided to terminate the scheme 'for the time being.'³²¹ The £20 in hand was equally divided between the four churches.

The archives contain no explanation why Wynne-Jones had left. A reasonable assumption is that it was linked to the enforced withdrawal of A.J. Watkins. However a letter from J.W. Hudson in November 1958 to Hubert Watson, who was now area superintendent, suggested there may have been underlying factors. Hudson refers to difficulties that are not financial, 'we are paying our way ... the difficulties are the members in a lack of fellowship one to another.' He reflects there has been no pastoral

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid, 31 March, 1946.

³¹⁷ Ibid, 7 April, 1946.

³¹⁸ Ibid, 6 November, 1946.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

oversight for twenty five years, other than the 'group period a few years ago,'³²² adding the cryptic comment 'instead of helping it made matters worse,'³²³ because the minister gave the best of his time and visits to one family. Given the close-knit extended family connections within many small churches in localized communities, it is likely attitudes had hardened during the twelve years since Wynn-Jones' departure. The bulk of the membership consisted of three families with bitter feuds between them. For example, the organist had been in office for fifty four years so another large family thought he should retire and his son take over. Hudson hoped Hubert Watson would be able to visit in the new year.³²⁴

A meeting of the ministers and deacons of the Wrexham area churches was held at Chester Street on 12 October 1955. The principal requirement was the need for pastoral oversight in all the churches because of the loss of teenagers, and 'the lack of leadership in many churches which made the situation most acute.'³²⁵ There was a need for teaching Baptist principles as 'young people were growing up without knowledge of what Baptists believe.'³²⁶ Lay preachers were 'not sufficiently organized to give effective help to the pastorless churches,'³²⁷ but the availability of good lay preachers might free ministers to visit the pastorless churches occasionally. Reference was made to 'the group of four churches under one pastor that had broken down.'³²⁸ Perhaps Hudson's assessment had been correct.

Further meetings were held devising various ideas but all the talk produced no action. One idea was a Wrexham and District Baptist Union. 'It would concern itself with the welfare of the churches and arrange such united meetings as was deemed advisable'³²⁹

321 Ibid, 20 April, 1947.

322 North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from J.W. Hudson to H. Watson, 5 November, 1958.

323 Ibid.

324 Ibid.

325 North West Baptist Assoc. archives, resume of Wrexham and District meeting 12 October, 1955.

326 Ibid.

327 Ibid.

328 Ibid.

329 Ibid.

which would be ‘of an inspirational nature.’³³⁰ It is difficult to see how this differed from Vaughan Morris’ concept of the Wrexham Fellowship of Churches or indeed from the Inland Area itself. Another consideration was ‘A Wrexham and District Ministers and Deacons Fraternal,’ for ‘the pooling of ideas and the sharing of service.’³³¹ Both the Wrexham District Union and the fraternal would have their own mini-bureaucracies of secretary, treasurer, and small committee. A third suggestion was a Wrexham and District Lay-preachers Federation ‘to which all lay-preachers and likely lay-preachers would be invited.’³³² Both sexes would be included and training arranged for the benefit of the pastorless churches. There could be some sort of preacher’s plan and the organisation ‘might embrace English and Welsh Baptist preachers.’³³³ The three possibilities came to nothing.

In 1957 Hubert Watson chaired a meeting attended by Rev. Ralph Drake of Chester Street, Rev. T.M. Jones of Bethel, Cefn Mawr, and representatives from Lodge, Llay and Buckley. Salem Newydd was not represented. Watson referred to Shotton receiving oversight from the church in Chester. The possibility of Flint being brought into the circle was raised but the consensus was that it ‘was too far away and it would be better to link it up with the coastal churches.’³³⁴ The delegates agreed ‘pastoral oversight was of urgent importance.’³³⁵ In Watson’s view there was a need for housing and finance. It was desirable for a minister to live in the Wrexham area but the Urban District Council ‘would not be sympathetic in view of the long waiting list.’³³⁶ The Rural District Council would be more sympathetic but most of their houses were well outside Wrexham town ‘and would involve extra travel and expense.’³³⁷

The minimum contribution towards a Home Work Fund grant was £225 p.a. which

330 Ibid.

331 Ibid.

332 Ibid.

333 Ibid.

334 North West Baptist Assoc. archives, notice of a meeting held at Chester Street on 19 January, 1957.

335 Ibid.

336 Ibid.

required each church to raise c. £65. That was unlikely to be a problem but Watson also asked whether a geographical grouping of churches similar to that between Shotton and Chester might be a viable alternative. Both Ebenezer, and Bethel, Cefn Mawr, could each look after a church, Ponciau could look after another and perhaps Buckley could be linked with Mold. After discussion it was deemed twinning arrangements were 'far better than forming another group,'³³⁸ and Watson was tasked with negotiating with the churches concerned. The outcome was stillborn.

Salem Newydd's absence was due more to a reluctance to participate rather than the inability of their representative to attend. In a lengthy letter to Hubert Watson, J.W. Hudson referred to a letter he had written to Vaughan Morris reflecting their reaction to the group ministry of the mid 1940s:

our church is not favourable to participate in the block of churches suggested as this visit of monthly intervals will not satisfy our needs, as we need oversight & Shepherd. It was this in the last time and broke down because of lack of it, with no fault to the Pastor but owing to the distance separating the churches and time allowed to fulfill the duties of calling at each church.³³⁹

There is no reference to the bitter family squabbles in the fellowship, but given there is less than three miles between Salem Newydd and Lodge distance could hardly have been a valid reason. His remarks possibly imply Salem Newydd wanted their own full time minister, which might have been their spiritual vision but was never an economic reality.

Abbey Road Llangollen was always a small church whose geographical position ensured it could only be considered for grouping with either Ebenezer, or Bethel in Cefn Mawr. A student pastorate had been a possibility in the late 1930s but Henry Townsend had informed the church it would not be possible until 1940. Most Sundays for 1939 were booked and the practice was for a student 'to undertake pastoral work and preaching for a period, and not for a broken series of Sundays such as the first in the month.'³⁴⁰ By the

³³⁷ Ibid..

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from J.W. Hudson to H. Watson, 18 November, 1958.

³⁴⁰ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from N. Harries to H. Motley, 19 January, 1939.

end of 1939 Llangollen were prepared to consider a joint pastorate with Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, who were also agreeable. As Llangollen had only three deacons they were concerned they might be overrun by Ebenezer so requested three Ebenezer deacons attend the joint meetings. Failing that, 'if Llangollen's representation is numerically weaker,'³⁴¹ they requested that decisions be unanimous. If unanimity could not be reached the issues should be submitted to Herbert Motley 'or some other responsible referee.'³⁴² Norman Harries, the lead figure in Llangollen at this time, also suggested there should be a constitution delineating the powers of the joint committee and its terms of appointment. Motley thought 'it would be unwise at this stage to ask Cefn to send only three of their deacons.'³⁴³ He advised Llangollen to participate whatever the numbers, and refer to him any points on which there was not unanimity.³⁴⁴ At the first meeting a joint secretary should be appointed who would be the contact 'on all matters relating to the settlement,'³⁴⁵ thus avoiding duplication and confusion. The joint treasurer would pass on the contributions from each church towards the minister enabling receipts to be signed for the sustentation grant. 'He will not function until such time as the minister settles,'³⁴⁶ and normal finance would not be dealt with by the joint treasurer.

Motley also outlined the role of a joint committee which should be held quarterly and act as the nexus of the project by preparing an advance plan which would accommodate special occasions. It would also act as the arbiter 'if either church feels that the other is getting an undue share of attention or any other matter disturbing the good fellowship.'³⁴⁷ The joint committee would also arrange the order in which a minister preaching with a view would visit each church for the morning and evening service. If there was a second visitor the order should be reversed, and continue in an alternating pattern until a settlement was made. Only ministers on the accredited or probationers lists, 'or students

³⁴¹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives letter from N. Harries to H. Motley, 28 December, 1939.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from H. Motley to N. Harries, 29 December, 1939.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

of the recognized colleges of the Baptist Union are eligible.’³⁴⁸ Consequently before any invitation is sent regarding the pastorate ‘the consent of the Executive shall be secured through me.’³⁴⁹ Besides endorsing the pivotal role of the area superintendent, the latter point also illustrates the classic dilemma in Baptist church life between those who would charge the BUGB with seeking centralized control of the churches, and the supervision of churches that have agreed to covenant together for mutual support and guidance.

Norman Harries’ anxiety regarding ‘equal representation’³⁵⁰ is evidenced in his correspondence with Ebenezer. He wrote to Ernest Wood within ten days of receiving Herbert Motley’s letter asking whether Ebenezer would be agreeable to Llangollen making up the number of their representatives with church members, and reiterated the point that ‘any question over which there is a failure to arrive at a unanimous decision should be submitted to the area superintendant.’³⁵¹ The matter was settled amicably. He wrote to Motley on 24 January informing him the first joint meeting ‘was a very happy one and is a good omen for the future’.³⁵² Llangollen had appointed two church members to balance the representation. Writing as secretary of the joint committee he confirmed that the arrangements outlined by Motley would be followed and indicated the kind of man they would be seeking. ‘The exceptional difficulties this appointment entails’ required ‘a man who will work hard enough to do some building up.’³⁵³ An experienced man would be preferred but a recommended student would be considered. ‘A Welshman, particularly one who could speak the language would be preferable, but this is by no means a vital matter.’³⁵⁴

Both churches called Haydn Thomas. His ordination and induction was held at Ebenezer on 18 September 1940.³⁵⁵ His ministry was ‘a short one although happy and

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Ibid.

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Ibid.

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North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from N. Harries to E. Wood, 9 January, 1940.

351

Ibid.

352

North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from N. Harries to H. Motley, 24 January, 1940.

353

Ibid.

354

Ibid.

355

G.V. Price. ‘Servants of God: history of the Baptists of Cefn Mawr and district’, unpublished MS

successful.’³⁵⁶ He left in early 1943 having accepted a call to New Park Street, Holyhead. His departure created a crisis for the joint committee. Motley had heard from Ebenezer that at the March joint committee meeting the Llangollen representatives ‘appeared very undecided about continuing the joint pastorate.’³⁵⁷ He conveyed his concern to Miss N. Cunliffe who now filled Norman Harries’ role, ‘if you do not continue in this group I am afraid you will drop back to where you were before Mr. Harries came.’³⁵⁸ Llangollen could only afford to pay £40 p.a. towards the joint pastorate. Motley doubted they could double that and if they were able to find another church to do the same, ‘you could not get a minister at the figure which would result, even with the sustentation grant.’³⁵⁹ It seemed distance from Cefn Mawr was the crux of the problem, but Motley insisted if finding another church was impossible, ‘the result will be that you are left without any pastoral oversight at all.’³⁶⁰

In January 1944 Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, called William Edwards but the joint pastorate had ended. In the spring Llangollen called Rev. Leonard Coombs to part time ministry. The records indicate Llangollen thought the distance from Cefn Mawr to be the major problem. There is no indication of any major disagreement having occurred yet no representative from Ebenezer appeared on the Induction service leaflet despite Coombs having been a much appreciated minister at Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, from 1912-21. It is interesting to note the induction prayer was given by Rev. Morgan Jones of Bethel, Cefn Mawr.³⁶¹

Coombs was aged seventy on his appointment to Llangollen. He retired from the church in 1950. A letter of concern from A.J. Watkins to Motley in December 1947 revealed the tragic personal circumstances in which Coombs exercised his ministry. Watkins referred

(1964). Chester St. Baptist Church, Wrexham, p.365.

356

Ibid.

357

North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from H. Motley to N. Cunliffe, 25 March, 1943.

358

Ibid.

359

Ibid.

360

Ibid.

361

North West Baptist Assoc. archives, induction leaflet for Rev. L. Coombs, 20 April, 1944.

to what he thought was 'a secret fund'³⁶² to support him. Prior to entering the ministry Coombs had been a jeweller in South Wales.³⁶³ Whilst in Llangollen he had part-time employment with 'Mr. Hughes the jeweller,'³⁶⁴ which had now finished. He had married, for a second time, 'a lady of some means,'³⁶⁵ invested in a guest house 'which proved a financial failure,'³⁶⁶ and was receiving '£1 per week from public assistance.'³⁶⁷ He preached once a month in the church and took a mid-week service for which he received £1-1-0d per week. Unfortunately 'although we have vacant churches all round he cannot get regular supplies,'³⁶⁸ and was not entitled to sustentation support. Watkins was concerned because Coombs was not yet seventy and was ineligible for an old age pension. However Coombs' obituaries state he died aged eighty-one³⁶⁹ so in 1947 he would have been seventy-three and eligible for a pension.

Following Coombs' retirement from Llangollen in 1950, Hubert Watson sought help through Tudwal Evans the secretary of the DFM association. Watson's approach illustrates how the area superintendent was the strategic link between two regional associations within different unions. Help, however, was not possible on the grounds of language and ecclesiology. The Welsh church in Llangollen had recently formed a joint pastorate with Garth and it was not thought 'the church in Castle Street would consider favourably an appeal to unite with the English,'³⁷⁰ and 'the Welsh church is a close communion church and the English open communion.'³⁷¹ Tudwal Evans suggested a link with Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr. However, for whatever reason no further link with Ebenezer transpired.

³⁶² North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from A.J. Watkins to H. Motley, 15 December, 1947.

³⁶³ Obituary notice, newspaper unknown, possibly *Liverpool Daily Post*, received from Coombs' grandson.

³⁶⁴ North West Baptist Assoc. archive, letter from A.J. Watkins to H. Motley, 15 December, 1947.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ *Baptist Times*, 15 October, 1955 & newspaper unknown, possibly *Liverpool Daily Post*, received from Coombs' grandson.

³⁷⁰ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from D. Tudwal Evans to H. Watson, 1 June, 1950.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

There is an interesting letter in the North Western association archives written in August 1949 by Vaughan Morris of Old Colwyn to Hubert Watson. Unfortunately the correspondence to which it relates is lost. Morris refers to the arrangement Penycae undertook for pastoral oversight from John Lewis of Salem, the Welsh Baptist church in the village. According to the *BUGB Handbook* the arrangement dated from 1943 as indicated in table 15. However Morris refers to it as if it were more recent, commenting the arrangement was made ‘without consulting the district officers of the association,’³⁷² consequently ‘they may have forestalled the formation of a group with a neighbouring English church such as Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr.’³⁷³ Morris recognizes the idea is ‘purely hypothetical at the moment,’³⁷⁴ but it is possible Llangollen was also at the back of his mind in his reference to the formation of a group, given that both Cefn Mawr churches had full-time ministry at this time. A grouping with Llangollen and Penycae was not geographically unrealistic.

The final attempt to salvage something for Llangollen occurred when Morgan Jones of Bethel, Cefn Mawr, made a brief report for Hubert Watson in July 1960. Their lay pastor, J. Harding, was contemplating a move to Wrexham, as he lived in Summerhill, which would leave Caesar Hughes as the only male member amongst a ‘dependable membership of about ten. The Sunday school is composed of about twelve regular children.’³⁷⁵ The dependable membership of ten is in contrast to the returns to the Lancashire and Cheshire association which indicate a membership of twenty-five for 1960 as shown in table 18. The contrast illustrates a common discrepancy between the membership a church might have on its books and the actual number who regularly attended.

Morgan Jones suggested two alternatives. One was to join with the Welsh church in Castle Street, ‘but they are in very low water,’³⁷⁶ despite the joint pastorate with Garth. The other was to join with a larger English church. Morgan Jones added ‘Bethel is the

³⁷² Ibid. Letter from I.V. Morris to H. Watson, 9 August, 1949.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, report on Abbey Road Llangollen ,2 July, 1960.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

only one near.³⁷⁷ If that were to happen he asks ‘would a grant be available?’³⁷⁸ as the extra burden could not be carried without a grant. Given that Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, was equally as near, Morgan Jones’ case amounted to special pleading. Hubert Watson had written ‘Ebenezer?’ at the foot of his copy.³⁷⁹ Vaughan Morris wrote to the incoming area superintendent, Norman Jones, on 21 January 1961 informing him ‘the church has been reduced to virtually one family – that of Caesar Hughes.’³⁸⁰ The building was good and ‘it would be a real tragedy to have to abandon it.’³⁸¹ He mentions Caesar Hughes had asked Morgan Jones of Bethel, Cefn Mawr, to assume oversight and take Sunday afternoon services, that Rev. Ridley Williams of Poncau intimated he could only help with some visiting, ‘and the Welsh church in Llangollen will not consider the question of a joint pastorate.’³⁸² Very shortly afterwards Llangollen closed. The building was sold in 1968. The balance of the proceeds of the sale paid to the Lancashire and Cheshire association was £3724.-8-3d.³⁸³

Following the abortive discussions between Chester Street and Penybryn in 1962-63, there was an undated letter probably written c. December 1964 which Norman Jones sent to the church secretaries at Llay, Bethel, Cefn, Ebenezer, Cefn, and Ponciau about the churches getting together. An idea for linking the smaller churches with ministerial oversight on an expenses only basis was floated at the NWEBU executive in the summer of 1966, but some combinations were geographically unrealistic. The secretary agreed to write to the ministers concerned to investigate the possibility of linking:

Llay with Alwyn Lake-Thomas of Union church, Colwyn Bay.
 Buckley with K.N. Edwards of Rhyl.
 Bethel, Cefn with Ridley Williams of Ponciau.
 Salem Newydd with A.C. Phillips of Llandudno.
 Shotton with Derek Thomas of Wrexham and A. Petty of Old Colwyn.

377 Ibid.

378 Ibid.

379 Ibid.

380 North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from V. Morris to N. Jones regarding Llangollen, 21 January, 1961.

381 Ibid.

382 Ibid.

383 North West Baptist Assoc. archives, -letter from Brett, Ackerley and Cooke, solicitors, to Rev. N. Jones, 6 May, 1969.

The Shotton archives record that Alun Petty wrote offering to preach and it was agreed he came on 23 April 1967. Derek Thomas of Chester Street agreed to preach on 28 May.³⁸⁴ However by December 1966 it had been agreed that J.W. Buckell be appointed as lay pastor. Derek Thomas of Chester Street acting as moderator had suggested Dennis Wright of Hoole Chester. However the members 'expressed the wish they would like J.W. Buckell to accept this office as he had always been so ready and willing to help.'³⁸⁵ The induction took place on 18 March 1967. Thereafter Shotton did not feature in any grouping proposals.

The next major effort at grouping occurred in the mid 1970s and is an example of associational influence emanating from the national president of BUGB. G. Henton Davies, principal of Regent's Park College, wrote to Eirwyn Morgan, principal of Bangor Baptist College, following his presidential preaching visit to Cefn Mawr in March 1972. He was concerned to learn that Seion and Tabernacl in Cefn Mawr, Cefnbychan, Ruabon and Froncysllte amongst the Welsh churches were without ministers and 'upon the retirement of John Jones from Corwen there will be no full time resident minister between Ruabon and Bala.'³⁸⁶ He was concerned that the Union leaders, presumably the BUW given the churches belonged to the DFM association, 'make an approach to the representatives of these churches to review the position and formulate a pastoral policy,'³⁸⁷ for a joint strategy to address the serious decline in the industrial and rural areas south of Wrexham. He suggested the Union secretary, the principal of Bangor Baptist College, and Trevor Hubbard discuss the matter prior to convening a conference.

Subsequently Trevor Hubbard wrote to Eirwyn Morgan suggesting 'if the idea of our discussing the issue seems worthwhile, we could make arrangements while we are at the

³⁸⁴ Shotton Baptist Church minute book, 16 January, 1966.

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 6 November 1966.

³⁸⁶ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from G. Henton Davies to D.E. Morgan, 21 March, 1972.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

B.U. Assembly in a few weeks time.’³⁸⁸ Eirwyn Morgan replied cautiously. ‘I would not wish to intervene in the province of the Baptist Union of Wales,’³⁸⁹ adding ‘if ever Ebenezer or Chester Street shared a ministry with Welsh-speaking churches we could cooperate. Till then you need have no conscience over the ‘native’ sector,’³⁹⁰ clearly implying that the Welsh speakers could be left to manage their own affairs. The eventual outcome amongst the English churches was ‘The Rhos/Cefn Partnership’ involving the two English-speaking churches in Cefn Mawr and Mount Pleasant Ponciau.

Surviving documentation is sparse. The groundwork was covered by Trevor Hubbard. The suggested salary was ‘in the region of £1100 depending on the experience of the man called.’³⁹¹ Mount Pleasant, as the principal church, would contribute £750, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, £350 and Bethel, Cefn Mawr, £100, with additional payments for national insurance, and superannuation. Travelling expenses were estimated at £750.

The strong spirit of independence within the three churches and the appointment in November 1974 of an equally strong-minded Lancashire man with little appreciation of Welsh culture did not bode well. After three difficult years the scheme folded. The minister concerned found it a painful experience and did not remain in Baptist ministry. He wrote ‘I remember virtually nothing of my time in Rhos/Cefn ...if I had my time over again (and had any real choice in the matter) would not become a Baptist minister.’³⁹² The effect of the experiment was such that Mount Pleasant would be reluctant to participate in any further scheme. Trevor Hubbard had considered it as a ‘long term project,’³⁹³ which would eventually create a team ministry for all the small inland area churches. He also anticipated close contacts with Chester Street and the lay preaching resources at Penycae.³⁹⁴ Its failure resulted in nothing being considered for a further

³⁸⁸ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from A.T. Hubbard to D.E. Morgan, 27 March, 1972.

³⁸⁹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, letter from D.E. Morgan to A.T. Hubbard, Good Friday, 1974.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, outline of Rhos/Cefn Fellowship.

³⁹² Personal correspondence from Terry Bartlam, May 2006, actual date not given.

³⁹³ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, outline of Rhos/Cefn Fellowship.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

eleven years.

The final attempt at grouping arose from a meeting in Chester Street on 23 October 1987. Amongst those attending were Miss Einwen Jones, then president of the BUW and secretary of the DFM association, Trevor Hubbard, and representatives from Chester Street and Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr. Bethel, Cefn Mawr, and Mount Pleasant, Ponciau, were not represented. Einwen Jones informed the meeting of a 'strategic ministry'³⁹⁵ involving Penybryn Wrexham, Sion and Bethania, Rhosllanerchrugog, Salem, Penycae, and Penuel, Rhosllanerchrugog and that 'there would be a readiness to cooperate with whatever arrangements were possible in the English churches of the area.'³⁹⁶ Discussion centred round the concept of a full-time district minister for the Wrexham area whose role 'would be that of an enabler, possibly building up a team of lay people to share in the total task of ministry in all the churches.' There would be difficulties if the appointee was based in a particular church so accountability 'would be through the North Wales District rather than through the local churches.'³⁹⁷ There might also be the possibility of a student placement from Northern Baptist college in Manchester. The four churches which could be involved were Chester Street, Ebenezer, and Bethel, Cefn Mawr and Ponciau.

Very shortly afterwards Bethel, Cefn, closed following a serious fire. 'Some of its members are now worshipping in a Welsh-speaking church.'³⁹⁸ As they did not transfer their membership to Ebenezer it has to be asked whether the rift that started Bethel c.1903 continued until its demise. Ponciau was not able at this time to be committed to the scheme,³⁹⁹ but would welcome help from the District Minister, their ambivalence reflecting their experience in the Rhos/Cefn fellowship of the 1970s. Reference was made to Penycae having a good number of young people and 'a developing work at Leeswood.'⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁵ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, aide memoire of meeting held 23 October, 1987.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ North West Baptist Assoc. archive, outline for North Wales District Minister,

³⁹⁹ Ibid,

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid,

The submission to the Home Mission Fund included a sociological reflection on the Wrexham area in the wake of the closure of the coal mines. Although industry was becoming more diversified 'it is still an area of high unemployment.'⁴⁰¹ The briefing paper refers to 'a depressed zone with poor housing.'⁴⁰² The area had no full-time Baptist minister, Welsh or English 'and hardly a minister of any denomination in a region once famous for its vibrant nonconformity.'⁴⁰³ The summary of the job description incorporated an ecumenical element as part of the assessment of the needs and opportunities of ministry and mission 'possibly alongside other denominations.'⁴⁰⁴ The appointment would be for an initial period of five years 'with a review taking place after four years.'⁴⁰⁵ The annual meeting of the NWEBU in April 1989 was informed that the scheme had been approved by the Home Mission Fund grants committee.⁴⁰⁶ Keith Hobbs, who had succeeded Trevor Hubbard as area superintendent, informed the half yearly meeting in October that the district minister would need to be someone with a Welsh background and a feeling for its culture who would engender the blessing and cooperation of the BUW.⁴⁰⁷ However at the annual meeting in April 1991 Chester Street reported that as it was in a position to call its own minister 'it is recognized that the plan for a district minister in the Wrexham area is not now viable'⁴⁰⁸

This final attempt at grouping was a combination of shared finance with denominational support within local geographical boundaries. Whilst the plan included missiological strategies such as the appointment of a 'mission enabler' training the local church leadership to play their own part in community based evangelism, it is inappropriate to judge consistent failure over seventy years by the current terms of mission centred ministry. The evidence suggests that churches sought the maintenance of members and

⁴⁰¹ North West Baptist Assoc. archives, briefing note for Home Mission, October, 1988.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ NWEBU Minute Book 1971 -.2008.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

congregations across several churches through a traditional pastoral approach. The key factors which sabotaged so many attempts include the decisions taken by Chester Street to withdraw A.J. Watkins in 1945 and to appoint their own minister in 1991 regardless of the consequences for the wider district. The failure to appoint someone sympathetic to Welsh culture to the Rhos/Cefn fellowship in 1974 was a crucial strategic mistake. The tunnel vision of independently minded churches, notably Salem Newydd, and the historic conflict between Ebenezer, and Bethel, Cefn Mawr, must also be taken into account.

The formation of Union Church Colwyn Bay

The formal merger between Princes Drive Baptist church and the English Congregational church in Colwyn Bay to form Union Church occurred two years after the original suggestion. The first service was held on 24 March 1946. The first church meeting was held on 1 May in Princes Drive. All the members of the uniting churches were enrolled as members of Union Church, but as the legal aspects of the various trusts could take eighteen months to finalise it was accepted that the united diaconate of both churches would remain in office until the formal merger of trusts was completed.⁴⁰⁹

The starting point for Princes Drive was pastoral pragmatism. For the Congregationalists it was ecumenical principle. Princes Drive had found difficulty in calling a minister to a church without a manse. During August 1944 the diaconate followed two possibilities concurrently. One was to suggest a joint pastorate with Old Colwyn who declined. The other was to call Rev. G.C. Thompson of Burnley. By 8 August Thompson indicated he was provisionally accepting 'subject to suitable accommodation.'⁴¹⁰ The diaconate considered converting the vestry into temporary living quarters, but Thompson considered it unsuitable and declined. The diaconate authorized the secretary to secure any suitable house for rent recognizing 'the lack of living accommodation in the district, at a rent of no more than £65 per annum.'⁴¹¹ The double failure placed the church in a position in

⁴⁰⁹ Llandudno Records Office CD/10/2/2. Colwyn Bay Congregational Church meeting minutes.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

which alternative suggestions would be eagerly considered.

The Congregational church had played a leading part in the 'Religion and Life Work' event held in the Pier Pavilion from 14-21 May 1944, providing the stewards on 18 May. Their deacons' meeting on 22 May referred to the 'high tone of the addresses delivered by various speakers,'⁴¹² and hoped that the churches would continue to work together by arranging similar meetings especially in relation to young people and children. The officers had arranged to meet the Baptist deacons on 8 June 'for the purpose of discussing the matter of having joint meetings during coming winter season.'⁴¹³

On 9 June the Baptist deacons endorsed the proposed joint meetings. The key reasons were shortage of space at the Congregational church as their downstairs accommodation had been commandeered for a British Restaurant, and both churches had experienced reduced attendance because of the war.⁴¹⁴ On 19 June a preliminary meeting for the proposed joint fellowship agreed that meetings be held on the first and third Monday and second and fourth Tuesday of each month. The organising committee would comprise three representatives from each church who would appoint a secretary and treasurer.⁴¹⁵ The meetings would be known as 'The United Fellowship'. On 2 October it was reported that the first meeting in the Baptist church had been a great success with about forty people present.⁴¹⁶ In May 1945 the Congregational deacons wrote to the Baptists expressing appreciation of the joint meetings which had culminated in an interchange of services on Sunday 6 May, and hoped for similar meetings next winter.⁴¹⁷

The United Fellowship appointed a commission 'to enquire into the re-union of the churches.'⁴¹⁸ Much of its report was given to the role of baptism. It recognized baptism

⁴¹² Llandudno Records Office CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Princes Drive Baptist Church Colwyn Bay, deacons' minute book.

⁴¹⁵ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.

⁴¹⁶ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/2, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church meeting minutes.

⁴¹⁷ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.

⁴¹⁸ Llandudno Records Office, Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the reunion of the churches. p.1.

by immersion ‘as practiced by the apostles and recorded in the Gospels,’⁴¹⁹ and that the ‘baptism of children or infants did not denote any act of will by the one baptized nor any act of regeneration as taught by the Episcopal church.’⁴²⁰ It considered the view that ‘baptism was a necessary prelude to church membership,’⁴²¹ but concluded it was a minority view ‘of those who advocate the practice of such a form of baptism.’⁴²² It deemed the necessity of baptism for church membership tantamount to ‘a declaration that baptism is essential for salvation,’⁴²³ and considered such a view unscriptural. There was an enigmatic statement that ‘such a contention’⁴²⁴ put the fellowship in ‘some difficulty’⁴²⁵ because there was ‘considerable evidence of specific cases of baptism by immersion not being followed by much evidence of belief.’⁴²⁶ There is no indication whether the comment was made regarding Princes Drive in particular or Baptists in general. The report did contain a paragraph outlining Jesus adaptation of the Jewish practice of baptism ‘following a non-Jew’s acceptance of the Jewish faith.’⁴²⁷

Regarding infant baptism the report referred to ‘the evidence submitted to us,’⁴²⁸ suggesting it was practised by the apostles when they baptized ‘the household.’ It recognized there was no written record to suggest such households contained very young children ‘too young to make a personal decision,’⁴²⁹ and that its practice was derived from that of ‘the Roman and Established Church,’⁴³⁰ but ‘whilst the practice has been continued ...the doctrine upon which it is based is rejected.’⁴³¹ In the Commission’s view infant baptism was practised ‘more for its psychological effect upon parents and witnesses.’⁴³² It was not for ‘any spiritual or religious benefit thereby derived or imparted

419 Ibid.
 420 Ibid.
 421 Ibid.
 422 Ibid.
 423 Ibid.
 424 Ibid.
 425 Ibid.
 426 Ibid.
 427 Ibid, p.2,
 428 Ibid,
 429 Ibid.
 430 Ibid.
 431 Ibid.
 432 Ibid.

to the child,⁴³³ but to emphasise the responsibility of parents and church in regard to the child.

The report recognized a possible impasse between Baptists who believed immersion an essential requirement for membership and Congregationalists who believed that whilst immersion may be right, found 'no authority for the contention that it is necessary for church membership.'⁴³⁴ The solution was 'capable only by some compromise.'⁴³⁵ On the part of Baptists it was by the recognition that 'public confession be the alternative to Believer's baptism as a requirement for church membership,'⁴³⁶ given that many Baptist churches practised open membership. For Congregationalists it was in the acceptance of the presentation of children to God and the accompanying pledge and dedication of the church and parents as an alternative to that involving the symbol of baptism.⁴³⁷

The Commission clearly stated that it had no intention 'to set forth the arguments for or against specific doctrine or doctrinal practice,'⁴³⁸ but to set out 'the extent of the differences and the proximity of beliefs and practice.'⁴³⁹ The solution lay in the pragmatic compromise 'that each of our two churches has something to learn from the other.' There was no attempt to reach a theological reconciliation of diverse practice within the biblical framework of 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism,' and no reference was made to the work that was done in the 1930s in relation to issues of unity and Baptist identity through the work of C.T. Lesquesne, Wheeler Robinson, Percy Evans, A.C. Underwood and others.⁴⁴⁰

By the autumn of 1945 the possibility of union was formally on the agenda. The first reference was made on 5 November in the Congregational deacons' meeting by their

433 Ibid.

434 Ibid, p.3.

435 Ibid.

436 Ibid.

437 Ibid.

438 Ibid.

439 Ibid.

440 See Randall *English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, pp.177-8.

recommendation to the church meeting that 'an approach be made to our Baptist friends.'⁴⁴¹ At the Baptist church meeting on 9 November the secretary reported a verbal approach had been made to 'consider the desirability of meeting a joint church.'⁴⁴² The invitation was cordially accepted and a joint deacons' meeting was held on 25 November. Meanwhile on 7 November the Congregationalists had appointed an inter regnum committee to deal with pulpit supply and the appointment of a new minister. Their minister, Lincoln Jones, had only accepted the pastorate for the duration of the war and was now 'getting on in years and could not do the visiting of members as he wished.'⁴⁴³

On 30 November, the Baptists considered the resolution emanating from the joint deacons' meeting of 25 November that it was 'desirable that the two churches should unite and that the two bodies of deacons should meet again at an early convenient date with a view to more detailed discussion.'⁴⁴⁴ Several suggestions were made for consideration by the joint meeting including:

- The post be available to ministers of both denominations
- The Congregational buildings be used for public worship and the Baptist building for week night activities
- The report of 'The Commission' held in the last session of the United Fellowship should form a basis for discussion on church membership and the sacrament of baptism
- That the current account of both churches be amalgamated.

The Congregational deacons took a cautious approach. On 3 December they considered the meeting with the Baptist deacons 'very successful,'⁴⁴⁵ and that an 'amalgamation of the two churches would be beneficial and in the interest of the Kingdom of God.'⁴⁴⁶ Decision making within the two churches reached a climax in January 1946. The Congregationalists were unanimous. Their deacons' met on 14 January and agreed that Lincoln Jones should preside at the church meeting. Leonard Moseley had informed

⁴⁴¹ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.
⁴⁴² Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, Church meeting minute book.
⁴⁴³ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/2, Colwyn Bay Congregational church meeting minutes.
⁴⁴⁴ Princes Drive Baptist Church Colwyn Bay, deacons' minute book.
⁴⁴⁵ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.
⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

them that a two thirds majority would carry the Baptist vote so they agreed to reciprocate. Because the Baptists felt they should share in the appointment of a new minister it was agreed if the special church meeting accepted the merger, that the Baptists would attend the evening service of Eynon Davies' second visit.⁴⁴⁷ The special church meeting of 16 January passed the resolution for merger unanimously after a 'very full discussion.'⁴⁴⁸

The Baptists also held their special church meeting on 16 January but the Princes Drive membership was less enthusiastic than the diaconate. The Baptist deacons ratified both the joint statement that 'churches whose aims and forms of government are identical should wherever possible unite,'⁴⁴⁹ and the joint committee's agreement:

In the union church provision for believer's baptism by immersion should be provided for and the practice of the dedication of infants should be confirmed but the use of water in such cases should only be at the specific request of the parents. Both believer's baptism and infant dedication should form part of a church service of worship but that neither should be necessary for church membership.⁴⁵⁰

The vote, by secret ballot, was to be regarded as a vote of confidence. If the resolution was lost the secretary was instructed to tender the resignation of the deacons. As the vote was tied at eight for and against, the chair declared the resolution to be lost and the secretary notified the meeting the deacons would resign at the end of their period of office.⁴⁵¹ The reaction was twofold. The minutes of the next Congregational deacons' meeting noted the result but, given the importance of the decision and almost certainly their disappointment at the outcome, no comment was recorded.⁴⁵² Princes Drive reconsidered the resolution at the annual meeting on 6 February and decided to proceed with the merger by thirteen votes to three.⁴⁵³

The re-run of the Princes Drive vote became more significant than it seemed. A special church meeting of the Congregationalists on 13 February learned that the Baptists had

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Llandudno Records Office ,CD/10/2/2, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church meeting minutes.

⁴⁴⁹ Princes Drive Baptist Church Colwyn Bay, deacons' minute book.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, church meeting minute book

⁴⁵² Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.

⁴⁵³ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, church meeting minute book.

rescinded their original decision by a large majority although the voting figures were not disclosed.⁴⁵⁴ The Baptist vote required a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. On the figures given the majority was 81.25%. However as there were sixty-eight full members only 19.11% of the total membership appeared to be in favour. The mathematics were sufficient to win the argument in 1946, but it can be argued that the silent majority brought their influence to bear on the decision taken in 1953 to restart Baptist worship at Princes Drive. It was also possible that an underlying sense of Baptist loyalty was stronger than the diaconate had recognised.

The most significant aspect of the merger was the adoption of the phrase 'child dedication.' It had been accepted by Princes Drive and was presented to the Congregational members as one of 'the chief resolutions upon which the Union will be based.'⁴⁵⁵ The emergence of the phrase 'infant baptism' perturbed many Baptist members of Union church and led ultimately to the restarting of Princes Drive as a Baptist church.

An interesting feature in the negotiations was that neither church consulted its regional leaders. The first united service was scheduled for 24 March. The decision to inform the Baptist area superintendent and the Congregational moderator was taken as late as the joint deacons' meeting of 25 February.⁴⁵⁶ No reason is given for the delayed contact. Speculation suggests it may have been linked to the innate sense of independency of churches founded on the congregational principle of self-government, coupled with a sense of self confidence in the belief that they were doing the right thing. On the other hand to have consulted the area superintendent and moderator sooner might have anchored the definitions on a more considered basis which may have pre-empted the re-establishment of Princes Drive. In retrospect the omission must be considered a failure in the practice of association.

⁴⁵⁴ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/2, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church, church meeting minutes.

⁴⁵⁵ Llandudno Records Office. Colwyn Bay Congregational Church, letter to church members, March 1946.

⁴⁵⁶ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.

The first sign of dissatisfaction came when the secretary notified the church meeting of 29 March 1953 of the resignation of three Baptist deacons.⁴⁵⁷ A trustees meeting arranged for 1 May gave opportunity for the Baptist members to meet them given that eighteen wished to revert to the Baptist church. It resulted in a *fait accompli* with a letter addressed to the secretary informing him arrangements were being made for Baptist worship to recommence on 7 June. By 7 May a trustees meeting was informed that twenty six Baptists wished to leave.⁴⁵⁸ A week later the trustees were informed that an unspecified number had indicated they were unable to withdraw and had decided not to proceed with re-establishing the Baptist church.⁴⁵⁹

A special deacons' meeting met on 20 May to agree the procedure prior to a special church meeting the same evening. The minister would take the chair, the secretary would deal with correspondence and questions arising, but to avoid the risk of undesirable discussion of personalities and the development of unhelpful recriminations the correspondence would not be read unless required on a vote.⁴⁶⁰ The crux of the problem is not indicated in the records until the church meeting of 8 July when it became clear that an amendment had been proposed to replace infant dedication with infant baptism. The Baptist trustees, meeting on 9 July, agreed that any amendment to the constitution which permitted infant baptism was a contravention of the assurances made by the Congregationalists prior to the merger.⁴⁶¹ Following the reconstitution of the Baptist church with an initial membership of twenty, its trustees resolved to inform Union Church that the Princes Drive premises would not be available to them after 25 July.⁴⁶² The Union Church meeting of 23 July arranged for a joint meeting at which it was asked whether Princes Drive would be available for ancillary meetings of Union Church, and whether the premises could continue to be used jointly on a shared cost basis but the

⁴⁵⁷ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/2, Union Church Colwyn Bay, church meeting minute book..

⁴⁵⁸ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, minute book.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.

⁴⁶¹ Princes Drive Baptist, Colwyn Bay, church minute book.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

requests were rejected.⁴⁶³ At this stage the Union delegates realized the only course open if a serious conflict was to be avoided was 'to accede to the situation imposed upon us.'⁴⁶⁴ The finality of separation occurred at the Union Church meeting of 7 August which accepted the demands made by the Princes Drive trustees to withdraw, but Union Church would retain its name as not all the Baptists had withdrawn.⁴⁶⁵

In June the NWEBU executive committee asked why Princes Drive had reopened but recommended their request to join. In September Hubert Watson wrote to Leonard Moseley, who was now acting as lay pastor, informing him that he had 'glanced over the trust deeds and was rather surprised to find a particular Baptist trust limiting both membership and communion to baptised believers.'⁴⁶⁶ Watson's comment was a good example of the advisory role of a superintendent. 'I think you have ignored this section of the deed and will wish to continue to ignore it in the future,'⁴⁶⁷ wisely adding the church might wish to consider adopting the new model trust deed of the BUGB which 'could give the church more freedom.'⁴⁶⁸

Union Church made a belated attempt to retrieve the situation at its church meeting on 26 October in agreeing to a constitutional amendment:

Believing that our Lord wishes young children to be brought into his family, the church together with the parents acknowledge and accept responsibility to train the child in the Christian way of life until he or she is of an age to make his or her own personal decision. It therefore publicly welcomes the child in either the Congregational or Baptist established method according to the wishes of the Parent.⁴⁶⁹

Unfortunately it was made too late. Princes Drive was reinstated into the Lancashire and Cheshire association on 8 July 1954. By 1958 its membership had grown to forty-one,

⁴⁶³ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/3, Colwyn Bay Congregational Church deacons' minutes.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/2/, Union Church Colwyn Bay, church meeting minute book.

⁴⁶⁶ Princes Drive Baptist, Colwyn Bay, church minute book.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Llandudno Records Office, CD/10/2/2, Union Church Colwyn Bay, church meeting minute book.

and by 1960 it was sixty.⁴⁷⁰ Table 30 indicates the membership figures from 1946-2000.

Social attitudes

In contemporary terms the incidents described seem minor, but they do reflect some serious social attitudes in the context of their time.

Sunday observance has been a contentious issue. It was raised in Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr, in 1925 when the pastor made a protest 'in a very nice form regarding the attitude taken by a lessee of Cefn Public Hall for allowing a Sunday evening theatrical programme for which a charge was to be made.'⁴⁷¹ At the evening service on 10 May the whole congregation stood to show their approval. In 1940 the NWEBU executive considered a letter from the Lord's Day Observance Society protesting at the opening of cinemas where troops were encamped. The secretary was asked to reply that local authorities should be approached rather than the prime minister or members of parliament. In a letter to Hubert Watson from the secretary at Salem Newydd reference was made to the possibility of holding a week-night meeting with him but a Saturday night meeting will 'not be of much avail, as our womenfolk are busy in their homes,'⁴⁷² probably peeling vegetables for Sunday lunch.

During the second world war temperance came to the fore. In February 1943 Penrallt, Bangor, voted unanimously on a proposition from Bangor Free Church Council requesting the licensing authorities to re-impose the 9.00pm closing time instead of 10.00pm. Besides the practical considerations of saving fuel and light, the last bus leaving Bangor at 9.00pm, and the strain placed on the police by war time conditions and duties preventing proper supervision, a later closing gave occasion for more drinking when there was a need to safeguard the life of young people from moral dangers

⁴⁷⁰ Princes Drive Baptist Church, Colwyn Bay, church minute book.

⁴⁷¹ Ruthin Records Office, ND/70/6, Ebenezer, Cefn Mawr minutes 1915-1938.

⁴⁷² North West Baptist assoc archives, letter from J. Hudson to H. Watson, 18 November 1958.

connected with the sale of intoxicating liquor.⁴⁷³ At the annual meeting of the NWEBU in 1945 Morgan Jones, minister of Bethel, Cefn Mawr, reported that he had sent out a questionnaire on temperance work among young people. The replies indicated very little was being done and the matter should be given serious attention 'in view of the increased habit of drinking among young people.'⁴⁷⁴ He returned to the theme at the executive committee in March 1945 in a discussion which he had initiated on temperance and social service as a means to counter the attractions of the public house and referred to a youth venture in Cefn Mawr.

The advent of premium bonds in 1956 felt the wrath of the NWEBU when its annual meeting passed a resolution deploring measures relating to their introduction.⁴⁷⁵ Dancing met the disapproval of the Chester Street deacons in 1959. Under the heading of the winter activities at Bradley Road 'it was advised that dancing should not form part of the Youth Club programme.'⁴⁷⁶

Accommodation differentials appeared normal. In 1950 Herbert Motley was attempting to present a case to the BUGB for funding towards a joint pastorate between Flint and Holywell. Having enquired whether Holywell had a manse he added 'it may be, of course, that you are thinking of inviting an unmarried man, and in that case the question of the manse will not arise.'⁴⁷⁷ A sense of social status, if not inverted snobbery, appeared in a letter from Barry Blake-Lobb, then of Moordown Bournemouth, to Norman Jones regarding a possible move to Wrexham:

Had you been super. in 1936 I might have been in the BUGB list of ministers. It was in your office that I was completely put off this, by being asked to change my name ...I was told my own name was too aristocratic for a Baptist minister and was advised to drop it if I was accepted for college training.⁴⁷⁸

In 1955 Llay sought the advice of Vaughan Morris regarding the marriage of divorcees.

⁴⁷³ Penrallt Baptist Church, Bangor, minute Book 2, February, 1943.

⁴⁷⁴ Ruthin Records Office, ND/133/2, NWEBU minute book 1937-70.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Chester Street Baptist Church, Wrexham, minute book 1956-63.

⁴⁷⁷ North West Baptist assoc. archives, letter from H. Motley to I. Williams, 6 March, 1950.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, letter from B. Blake-Lobb to N. Jones, 3 March, 1962.

He replied that 'the BUGB has no definite ruling concerning the marriage of divorced persons.'⁴⁷⁹

Conclusion

The period in question is often regarded as the age of decline within most denominations. There are exceptions nationally and, as shown in table 30, within the NWEBU. It is easy to make the secularization of society a scapegoat but because it is a common factor for every church the reasons have to be found a little deeper. Liberal theology is often cited by conservative evangelicals but its antithesis does not of itself reverse the trend. The ministry within the NWEBU has always been within a broad evangelical spectrum. The reasons for decline have centred on the lack of pastoral oversight, a failure to hold young people, demographic changes and a resistance to change.

It can be argued that the disappearance of many of the smaller churches within north east Wales was principally due to failure in securing ministry on a group basis. The geography of the area, the disappointment of churches through discovering that within a grouping they did not have a full-time pastor to themselves, stubborn independence and resistance to change all played their part. Where there has been growth does not necessarily reflect a pastoral continuum. Penrallt, Bangor, for example, has enjoyed a more constant ministry than Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay and Sussex Street, Rhyl. Evangelistic vibrancy, a willingness to accept change, and a strong community involvement have also played a part in bucking the trend in the smaller churches such as Llanelwy and Leeswood as well as the larger fellowships.

Geographical significance is seen in greater attention being given to the north eastern churches than to the coastal churches in order to reflect the disproportion of activity within the two areas. This is primarily evidenced in the various groupings that were suggested for the smaller churches in the north east, and the consideration of a bi-lingual

⁴⁷⁹ Llay Baptist Church. Letter from Vaughan Morris 9 February 1955.

pastorate for Wrexham.

Linguistic significance stemmed from the organisational structure of the Welsh union and the DFM coupled with what might be interpreted as a reluctance to allow the English churches to be seen as taking over, as much as from fears for the diminution of the Welsh language.

The period reveals a rich mixture of associational involvement within the life of the NWEBU and between some its churches, alongside the role of the area superintendent as a regional and national representative. The balance of archive material also confirms the lack engagement with national political and social concerns as the NWEBU and its churches came to be almost wholly centred on their own domestic concerns.

SUMMARY OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

CHAPTER SIX **1920-2000**

Douglas Allingham	Minister at Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay
M.E. Aubrey	General Secretary of the BUGB
Vera Barson	Secretary of the Baptist Womens' League. Deaconess' organiser
David Coffey	General Secretary of the BUGB
D. Tudwal Evans	Secretary of the DFM Association
D. Evans J.P.	Deacon at New Park Street, Holyhead
R.T. Evans	General Secretary of the B.U.W.
Bernard Green	General Secretary of the BUGB
Maelor Griffiths	Secretary of Chester Street, Wrexham
Chris Haig	Secretary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association
Norman Harries	Lay pastor of Bethel, Holywell
Stephen Heap	Minister at Chester Street ,Wrexham
Keith Hobbs	Area Superintendant for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association
Trevor Hubbard	Area Superintendant for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association
J.W. Hudson	Secretary of Salem Newydd
Glynne Jones	Secretary of the DFM Association
Morgan Jones	Minister at Bethel, Cefn Mawr
Norman Jones	Area Superintendant for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association
T.J. Russell Jones	Welsh Baptist minister
W.H. Jones	Minister at Penrallt, Bangor, and then Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay
Alwyn Lake-Thomas	Minister of Union Church, Colwyn Bay
Thomas Morgan	Minister at Penrallt, Bangor
T.J. Morgan	Minister of Bethel, Cefn Mawr
Herbert Motley	Area Superintendent for the Lancashire and Cheshire association
Vaughan Morris	Minister at Old Colwyn English Baptist church and secretary of the NWEBU
Leonard Moseley	Lay pastor at Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay
Peter Radford	Minister at Princes Drive ,Colwyn Bay
J.Rice Rowlands	Baptist minister in Gaerwen. He later became Principal of the North Wales Baptist College Bangor.
J.H. Shakespeare	General Secretary of the BUGB
Ivy Manning	Deaconess linked to Shotton
Alun Petty	Minister at Old Colwyn English Baptist church
J.M.D. Robertson	Area Superintendant for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association
Dr. H. Rowley	Professor of Old Testament studies at Bangor University
William Shaw	Lay pastor of Llysfaen Free church
Brian Strangward	Secretary of the NWEBU
Michael Taylor	Principal of Northern Baptist College, Manchester, President of the BUGB in 1971
Haydn Thomas	Minister at New Park Street, Holyhead

Hector Thomas	Area Superintendant for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association
L.E. Valentine	DFM Association
A.J. Watkins	Minister at Chester Street, Wrexham
Hubert Watson	Area Superintendant for the Lancashire And Cheshire Association
Boaz Williams	Secretary of the DFM Association
G.N. Williams	Minister at Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay
M.J. Williams	General Secretary of the B.U.W.
Nigel Wright	Minister at Ansel Baptist church, Lytham St. Annes and later Principal at Spurgeon's College
E.V. Wynne-Jones	Minister of the Wrexham Fellowship of churches

CONCLUSION

Different and contrasting conditions spanning four centuries have developed the history of English-speaking Baptist life within north Wales. The interplay of local institutions with wider regional and national influences has created an evolution of heritage through the passing of time.

The emergence of a Baptist cause in the seventeenth century was forged by the changing fortunes of dissent through the period of puritan supremacy and the repressive years of Anglican dominance following the restoration of the monarchy. The foundation of a receptive open communion church laid by Morgan Llwyd were followed by the resilience of John Evans and Philip Henry in their differing ecclesiological contributions to local nonconformity. The Crisp controversy and the New Meetings' connection with Daniel Williams ensured a parting of the ways with the hard-line Calvinism of the Old Meeting, as expressed by Thomas Edwards of Rhual. John Williams' baptism by immersion set the joint Independent and Baptist fellowship of the Old Meeting in a clear Baptist direction.

The Toleration Act of 1689, and the Act of Settlement of 1701 led to the stability of the Hanoverian years of the eighteenth century. Despite the handicap of the Test and Corporation Acts, it was a period which provided freedom for dissenters to worship and engage in mission. For the Baptists of north east Wales expansion was most notably sustained through the bi-lingual work of Evan Jenkins and David Jones. The lasting contribution was the ecclesiological framework set by the rigid logic of Joseph Jenkins through his revision of the trust deeds, which legally established the Old Meeting as a Baptist church. His Calvinism did not prevent the practice of open communion which has been a lasting heritage from the time of Morgan Llwyd. The practice also distanced the Wrexham church from the newly formed Baptist churches in Newbridge, Glyn Ceiriog and also the Welsh association. Linguistic considerations also contributed to the associational break with these two churches. The emergence of Robert Roberts as a

Sandemanian suggests the possibility of there having been a local intellectual connection with Thomas Crane the bookseller who was originally a member of the Old Meeting. As the father in law of William Jones, Crane's influence also became significant for both the Scotch Baptists and Campbellites.

The geographical significance of Wrexham in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was rooted in the seventeenth century as a centre for dissent as well as its importance as a market town. The geographical importance of north east Wales was enhanced during the early years of the nineteenth century with the development of iron-making, the ceramics industry, the Llangollen canal and the arrival of the railways. The influx of English labour affected the linguistic balance of the Cefn Mawr district and led to the concept that Welsh and English meetings within the same building was impracticable. The same consensus of opinion also led to the development of the English-speaking Baptist causes in Holyhead, Bangor and Colwyn Bay. The Llandudno and Rhyl churches developed in the wake of the arrival of the railway and the development of those towns as holiday centres for the industrial middle class from the north west of England and the midlands. Whilst the goodwill of Welsh Baptists was crucial for the establishment of several English causes, the churches at Llandudno and Rhyl came into being solely for the benefit of the holidaymaker. The growth of nonconformity in the nineteenth century and the significance of its role in national debates concerning education, social reform, and ecclesiology were reflected particularly in the vibrant Baptist life of Wrexham and Cefn Mawr and the personal contributions of Simon Jones and Hobson Thomas.

Whilst the majority of the English-speaking Baptist churches were founded in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the NWEBU itself in 1879, active associating amongst all the churches did not begin until the final decade of the century and the early years of the twentieth century. The role of area superintendents from the creation of the sustentation fund gave a fresh dynamic to associating within the NWEBU through the regional and national connections which the area superintendents brought to bear.

In the early part of the twentieth century the surge of Victorian expansion fell away. There was no emergence of local leaders of the calibre of Simon Jones and Hobson Thomas, which led to a diminution in the engagement of English-speaking Baptists in North Wales within the wider fields of public debate. Nonconformity contributed to national ecumenical dialogue through its leaders, but within the NWEBU ecumenical exchange was virtually non-existent. Nationally ecclesiological argument and educational controversy did not reach the levels of the nineteenth century controversies, and the lack of public engagement, contributed to the NWEBU and its churches becoming absorbed in the mundane routines of associational life.

Geographically the NWEBU divided into the two administratively practical halves of the coastal churches and the inland area of the north east for localised activities, but maintained its unity for the annual and half-yearly meetings in the spring and autumn.

Linguistically, in the middle of the twentieth century, the English-speaking Baptist community was content within the parallel worlds of the BUGB and the BUW. Sporadic attempts at united action and shared pastorates never came to anything in the face of incompatible bureaucracy, and a lack of a persistent will for things to happen. English and Welsh-speaking Baptists became locked into their traditions less from hostility and more from the rigidity of their perceptions.

At the start of the twenty-first century organisational realignment has occurred throughout Wales post devolution, creating a holistic dimension that extends from quangos to commercial operations. The NWEBU realised that overall effectiveness in mission required a similar change. Consequently, in 2008, the NWEBU became an affiliated association of the BUW in order to facilitate a unified operation together with its continuing membership of the North Western association of BUGB. The NWEBU has realized that it had become an inward looking bureaucracy, and seeks to organise events with a view to stimulating fellowship between the churches and encouraging effective mission. Whether further practical outcomes will occur remains to be seen as the

geography of north Wales, linguistic considerations and associating interact with regional and national issues in the continuing development of the heritage of the English-speaking Baptist community.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STATISTICS

Information can be extrapolated according to interest such as changes of minister, association affiliation, seating capacity, fluctuations in membership and Sunday school etc.

Explanatory notes

Fnd	The year the church was founded
Seats	The seating capacity of the church
Mbrs	The number of members
S.S.Ts	The number of Sunday school teachers
Chldn	The number of Sunday school children
Y.Ps	Young people
L-Ps	The number of lay preachers in membership
Stld	The year the minister settled
Assoc	The association to which the church belonged
C	The Caernarfonshire and Anglesey association of the Baptist Union of Wales
DFM	Denbigh Flint and Merioneth Association of the Baptist Union of Wales
L&C	The Lancashire and Cheshire association of the Baptist Union of Great Britain
Coedllai	The Welsh name for Leeswood
Ponkey	The English version of Ponciau
Table 1	Figures comparing those for 1904 with other years through to 1914
Table 2	Comparative trends from 1916 – 2000
Table 3	The Home Mission Fund returns for Penrallt, Bangor, for 1931-1971
Tables 4-27	Annual statistics for the churches connected with the NWEBU from 1895 -2000 at approximately five year intervals. These tables indicate the associations to which churches belong and, where relevant, the movements between associations.
Table 28	Returns of the Wrexham area Baptist churches from the 1851 religious census.
Table 29	Comparative figures 1922-1939
Table 30	Comparative figures 1946-2000

TABLE 1

COMPARATIVE FIGURE 1904-1914

	<u>1904</u>			<u>1905</u>			<u>1907</u>			<u>1908</u>			<u>1909</u>			<u>1914</u>		
	Mbr	Tchr	Chld	Mbr	Tchr	Chld	Mbr	Tchr	Chld	Mbr	Tchr	Chld	Mbr	Tchr	Chld	Mbr	Tchr	Chld
<u>Cefn Mawr</u>																		
E	106	13	140	106	13	140	124	13	170	124	13	175	124	13	175	102	13	170
E							87	8		87	8	126	87	8	126	77	11	130
W	241	35	350	276	110	400	323	110	400	355	35	350	350	35	350	327	35	350
W	156	23	250	156	27	324	217	26	310	176	19	309	164	21	330	147	23	220
<u>Ponciau</u>																		
W	174	34	330	190	36	400				205	40	384	220	42	392	180	40	340
E	69	14	172	64	14	172				93	16	173	95	16	173	85	17	189
<u>Penycae</u>																		
W	204	36	300	183	36	300				225	36	300	214	36	300	207	23	447
E	28	11	60	30	11	60				48	12	60	38	10	50	34	12	82
<u>Wrexham</u>																		
E	107	21	172	110	20	195				134	15	128	140	14	123	177	11	86
W	70	12	105	73	12	105				95	10	73	90	12	70	89	13	70
W	37	8	80	32	6	60				40	7	80	32	5	40	24	5	40
<u>Rhosllanerchrugog</u> (Welsh)	268	50	674	282	48	670				292	48	340	290	48	530	277	43	350

E denotes English speaking W denotes Welsh speaking

TABLE 2

The selected churches in this table indicate 3 general trends

1 an overall upward trend

2 fluctuations

3 an overall downward trend

COMPARATIVE TRENDS

CHURCH	1916	1922	1926	1930	1934	1939	1946	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1977	1982	1987	1992	1996	2000	
Holyhead																				
Newry St	106	124	151	140	132	139	80	140	132	76	133	70	65	57	52	18	29	34	26	
Baker St	60	40	**	**	**	**	**	**	30	CLOSED										
Penrallt Bangor	61	46	61	55	70	61	67	58	60	86	68	76	66	66	75	71	78	91	73	

** Subsumed with Newry St.

A more detailed presentation of these figures in the context of Home Mission applications will be found in table 3

Colwyn Bay In broad terms Princes Drive has shown a general upward trend

Princes Drive	64	78	78	91	107	166	115	-	56	77	89	89	65	64	87	116	175	195	221
----------------------	----	----	----	----	-----	-----	-----	---	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	-----	-----	-----	-----

The figure for 1946 illustrates the numerical decline that contributed to the merger with the English Congregational church

The figures from 1960 relate to the re-establishment of Princes Drive

Rhyl

Sussex St	39	56	48	62	47	65	76	83	109	132	151	132	121	118	117	194	178	168	125**
Grapevine																			21

Llandudno

	82	92	125	141	129	82	84	47	57	61	60	40	48	41	28	22	21	22	23
--	----	----	-----	-----	-----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

The decline in Llandudno's figures since 1970 relates to the loss of the building in Mostyn Street, followed by many years in temporary accommodation. The church secured a permanent home in a former Anglican church.

Union Colwyn Bay

									209	152	175	177	181	135	91	83	71	57	51
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	----	----	----	----	----

The drop in 1955 is accounted for by the seceding Baptists. The later decline is related to an aging congregation and a lack of young people

TABLE 2 Cont'd

CHURCH 1916 1922 1926 1930 1934 1939 1946 1950 1955 1960 1965 1970 1975 1977 1982 1987 1992 1996 2000

Flint

22 23 23 25 25 23 33 36 34 29 26 26 Flint closed in 1962

The problem for Flint was a failure to secure a joint pastorate with Holywell or Bagillt which were both in decline, and geographically it was too far from the churches of North East Wales.

Details have not survived. Statistically it appears viable for a small church. A lack of leadership and/or exaggerated returns would have been detrimental.

Lodge

42 34 n/a 58 49 50 19 27 9 4 10 closure

The war years took their toll along with the failure of the Wrexham District Fellowship with E.V. Wynne-Jones

Salem Newydd

60 35 34 49 55 38 44 46 50 41 24 18 15 15 15 CLOSED

The failure of the Wrexham District Fellowship and later grouping schemes was significant. Three families transferred to Chester Street in the late 1960s

Cefn Mawr

108 138 122 80 98 91 112 140 99 83 104 45 45 45 31 25 18 10 closed

Ebenezer

72 81 67 105 98 89 96 101 74 83 85 48 37 30 14 26 18 closed

Bethel

The lack of pastoral oversight since 1965, the failure of the Rhos/Cefn Fellowship, and the historic lack of cooperation between the two churches were significant factors leading to closure.

Llangollen

47 50 56 46 38 35 30 25 24 (a)25 CLOSED

(a) Only ten dependable members.' Letter from I.V. Morris to N. Jones 21 January 1961

TABLE 3 PENRALLT, BANGOR, APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE

Until 1948 the application forms are headed MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT & SUSTENTATION FUND

From 1948-1961 there is no particular title

From 1962 the forms are headed THE HOME WORK FUND

In the years from 1930-1948 the forms contained space for comments from the Association and the Area Superintendent. In the case of

Penrallt there were no comments from either party for any year

	<u>Minister</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Rec'd</u>	<u>Baptisms</u>	<u>Profs</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	<u>H.C. ave</u>	<u>A.M. ave</u>	<u>P.M. Ave</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
1930		68	8							
1931		71	10							
1932		70								
1933		72								
1934	Ceiriog Rogers	74	8							
1935		70		3		9				
1936	Vacant	64								
1937	Roland Howarth	61								
1938	Roland Howarth	69		5		11				
1939	Roland Howarth	67		1		7				
1940	Talfryn Davies	69				3				
1941	Talfryn Davies	69		2		3				
1942	Talfryn Davies	68				1				
1943	Talfryn Davies	66				3				
1944	Talfryn Davies	72		6	1					
1945	Vacant	50		6	1	4				
	From 1946 the forms ask for the average attendance at Communion and the morning and evening services									
1946	Vacant	49				2	45	25	50	

TABLE 3 Cont'd (page 2)

	<u>Minister</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Rec'd</u>	<u>Baptisms</u>	<u>Profs</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	<u>H.C. ave</u>	<u>A.M. ave</u>	<u>P.M. Ave</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
1947		57		2			48	30	50	There is a note stating that the Pastorale is in the temporary charge of Principal J. Williams Hughes of Bangor Baptist College, and that Mr. I.D.E. Thomas, a Baptist College student was acting as his assistant.
1949	E.G.Cole	58		3			45	30	50	
1950	E.G.Cole	58					40	30	50	
1951	E.G.Cole	54					40	36	50	
1952	E.G.Cole	59		6			40	36	50	
1953	E.G.Cole	60		2			45	38	50	
1954	E.G.Cole	60		7			48	38	50	
1955	T. Haydn James	76		2			48	38	50	
1956	T. Haydn James	81		5			48	38	55	
1957	T. Haydn James	79		16			60	45	65	
1958	T. Haydn James	85		6			60	50	65	
1959	T. Haydn James	80		6			60	50	65	
1960	Vacant	74		8			60	50	65	
1961	Alun Williams	55		4			55	45+5 cdn	55	
1962	Alun Williams	56		3			56	45+4 cdn	55	
1963	Vacant	60					60	45+3 cdn	60	
1964	W.H. Jones	59					60	48+4 cdn	65	
1965	W.H. Jones	61		2				58 50+4 cdn	70	
1966	W.H. Jones	61		3				No figures given		
1967	W.H. Jones	69+7assoc		6			62	50	70	
1968	W.H. Jones	68+7assoc		2			57	40	60	

TABLE 3 Cont'd (page 3)

	<u>Minister</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Rec'd</u>	<u>Baptisms</u>	<u>Profs</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	<u>H.C. ave</u>	<u>A.M. ave</u>	<u>P.M. Ave</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
1969	W.H. Jones	75								Figures not required An added note from the Church Secretary states that attendance is increasing steadily during college terms. The spiritual life of the church was rich. 2 students had dedicated their lives to the ministry and were going to Spurgeon's College. A new Sunday School had been opened on the Coed Mawr estate
1970	W.H. Jones	70								Figures not required The Secretary's additional note states that several loyal students had left, and had not been replaced, but special efforts were to be made.
1971	Vacant	66				32 (43)	20 (51)	30 (55)		Figs in brackets after the new minister (Roy Jenkins) The Secretary's additional note states that the minister (W.H. Jones) had retired and several workers had moved away. Students had also left and had not been replaced. The Sunday School at Coed Mawr had closed. It had been a difficult year with a shortage of young workers. The Church was looking forward to the appointment of a new minister.

Explanatory notes

Profs	Stands for professions of faith. As a closed membership church these figures would be included under baptisms
Transfer	The transfers from and to other churches are not recorded
H.C. Ave	The average attendance at communion
A.M. Ave	The average morning attendance
P.M. Ave	The average evening attendance

<u>TABLE 4</u>	<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1864</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
	Holyhead	30							The 1864 handbook only
	Llandudno	No figures	and summer season only						gives the number of
	Rhyl	No figures	and summer season only						members for each church
	Mold	39							
	Wrexham	43				J. Lyon			

TABLE 5 CHURCH	YEAR	1889	YEAR	1889	MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
	MBRS	S.S.Ts.	CHLDN	L-Ps				
Holyhead	58	13	113		S. Roberts	1888		
Penrallt, Bangor	45	8	71		W.R. Saunders	1878		
Llandudno	51	7	80	1	J. Raymond	1878		
Rhyl	57	6	60					
Flint	18	7	40	1				
Mold	61	10	110		T. Shankland	1888		
Buckley	14	11	90		D. Davies	1888		
Leeswood	12	4	25	1	J. Pickering	1880		
Wrexham								
Chester St.	73	13	150	2				
Holt	15	7	70					
Lodge	No figures							
Salem Newydd	59	12	80					
Penycae	27	4	40		T. Roberts	1888		

TABLE 6

YEAR 1895

CHURCH	MBRS	S.S.Ts.	CHLDN	L-Ps	MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
Holyhead	46	10	90		G. Evans	1894		
Penrallt Bangor	50	9	51	1	W.R. Saunders	1878	C & LC	
Llandudno	82	5	90		J. Raymond	1878	LC	
Colwyn Bay (Eng)	41	7	50		H.T. Cousins	1894	LC	
Old Colwyn	12	4	12		J. Brasted	1894	LC	
Rhyl	64	5	40	2	D.G. Lewis	1892	LC	
Flint	13	5	40				DFM/LC	
Mold								
Ebenezer	65	11	174	1	T. Morgan	1894	DFM	
Maesydre Mission			No tyet in exisatence					
Leeswood	12		22				DFM	
Buckley								
Wrexham								
Chester St.	142	16	187	3	J.H. Thomas	1892	S	
Bradley Rd			No tyet in exisatence				S	
Holt	12	7	128				S	
Lodge	20		65				DFM	
Salem Newydd	54						DFM	
Ponciau	54	14	150				LC	
Penycae	22	6	50				LC	
Cefn Mawr								
Ebenezer	121	13	160		J. Thomas	1886	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	41	8	60		H. Rees	1894	LC	

TABLE 7

CHURCH	MBRS	S.S.Ts.	CHLDN	YEAR		MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
				L-Ps	1905				
Holyhead									
New Park St.	74	9	95		G. Evans	1894	LC		
Baker St. Mission	16	7	63						
Penrallt Bangor	73	10	60	5	W.R Saunders	1878	C & LC		
Llandudno	99	7	93	2	J. Raymond	1878	LC		
Colwyn Bay (Eng)	63	6	64	2	H.T. Cousins	1894	LC		Prior to the move to Princes Drive
Old Colwyn	30	6	56		E.T Davies	1891	LC		
Rhyl	42	5	53		D.G. Lewis	1892	LC		
Flint	18	2	24				DFM/LC		
Mold									
Ebenezer	73	21	140		T. Morgan	1894	DFM		Welsh speaking at this time
Maesydre Mission		No figures are given							English speaking
Leeswood	27	5	50	2	J.C. Davies	1903	DFM		Welsh speaking at this time
Buckley									
Ebenezer	20	7	100	1	E. Whitton	1893			
Nant Mawr	16	6	69	2					
Wrexham									
Chester St.	110	20	195	4	J. Havard	1902	S		
Bradley Rd		The figures are included with Chester St.					S		
Holt		The figures are included with Chester St.					S		
Lodge	24	5	55				DFM		
Salem Newydd	48	16	85				DFM		Entered as Moss
Ponciau	64	14	172		J. Humphreys	1899	LC		
Penycae	30	11	60		W.B. Jones	1898	LC		Jones the minister of Salem (Welsh)
Cefn Mawr	106	13	140		W.O. Williams	1898	DFM/LC		Bethel just beginning. No figures
Llangollen	40	7	65		E.W. Jenkins	1903	LC		

TABLE 8

CHURCH	MBRS	S.S.Ts.	CHLDN	YEAR		MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
				L-Ps	1909				
Holyhead									
New Park St.	98	9	101		J.B. Ashton	1907	LC		
Baker St. Mission		9	110						
Penrallt Bangor	67	11	65	4	W.R. Saunders	1878	C/LC		
Llandudno	86	8	125	1	J. Raymond	1878	LC		
Colwyn Bay (Eng)	72	6	60	1	H.T. Cousins	1894	LC		
Old Colwyn	33	6	55		E.T. Davies	1901	LC		
Rhyl	51	4	36		G.E. Johnston	1907	LC		
Flint	24	3	24		R. Williams	1907	LC/DFM		Williams also minister at Bagillt
Shotton	The church was founded in 1908. No figures given								
Mold									
Ebenezer	89	16	102		T. Morgan	1894	DFM		Mainly Welsh-speaking
Maesydre Mission		5	66						English-speaking
Leeswood	27	5	47	1					Welsh-speaking
Buckley									
Ebenezer	9	4	66	2	J.L. Bowen	1908			
Nant Mawr	9	5	50	2	J.L. Bowen	1908			
Wrexham									
Chester St.	140	14	123	3					
Bradley Rd		7	56						
Holt	The figures are included under Chester St.								
Lodge	15	5	45					DFM	
Salem Newydd	55	13	126		W. Rowlands	1905			
Ponciau	95	18	173	3	J.W. Humphreys	1899	LC		
Penycae	38	10	50		W.B. Jones	1898	LC		Minister at Salem (Welsh)

TABLE 8 Cont'd CHURCH	MBRS	S.S.Ts.	CHLDN	YEAR		STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
				L-Ps	<u>1909</u> MINISTER			
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	87	8	126	<u>3</u>			DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	124	13	175	1	W.O. Williams	1898	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	47	7	50		J.G. Reed	1907	LC	

TABLE 9		YEAR		1916				
CHURCH	MBRS	S.S.Ts.	CHLDN	L-Ps	MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
Holyhead								
New Park St.	106	14	119	1	A.R. Morgan	1912	LC	
Baker St. Mission	60	7	145					
Penrallt Bangor	61	8	35	2	W.R. Saunders	1878	C/LC	
Llandudno	82	7	90	1	J. Raymond	1878	LC	
Colwyn Bay (Eng)	64	6	66	1	D. Griffiths	1909	LC	Now in Princes Drive
Old Colwyn	37	5	59		J. McKeracher	1914	LC	
Rhyl	39	2	32				LC	
Flint	22	3	36				LC/DFM	
Shotton	46	8	60					Welsh speaking at this time
Mold								
Ebenezer	83	11	100		T. Morgan	T. Morgan	DFM	Mainly Welsh speaking
Maesydre Mission		12	130				LC	English speaking
Leeswood	23	5	31	1				Welsh speaking at this time
Buckley								
Ebenezer	15	5	50		I. Griffiths	1914		
Nant Mawr	8	3	32	1	I. Griffiths			
Wrexham								
Chester St.	194	11	68	5	L. Morris	1909	LC	
Bradley Rd		9	60				LC	
Holt	15	1	40				LC	
Lodge	42	12	74				DFM	
Salem Newydd	60	13	102					
Ponciau	87	18	203		J.P. Griffiths	1913	LC	
Penycae	30	11	82		W.B. Jones		LC	Minister at Salem (Welsh)

TABLE 9 Cont'd

YEAR 1916

CHURCH	MBRS	S.S.Ts.	CHLDN L-Ps	MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
Cefn Mawr							
Bethel	72	9	120			DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	108	14	170	L. Coombs	1912	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	47	8	36	H. James	1914	LC	

TABLE 10

YEAR 1922

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Holyhead								
New Park St,	124	9	70		A.R. Morgan	1912	LC	
Baker St. Mission	40	9	60					
Penrallt, Bangor	46	5	26	2	T. Morgan	1918	C/LC	
Llandudno	92	9	81		J. Raymond	1878	LC	
Colwyn Bay Princes Drive	78	5	55	2	J.A. Jones	1918	LC	
Old Colwyn	40	5	40				L.C.	
Rhyl	56	7	52				LC	
Flint	23	4	40	1			DFM/LC	
Shotton	51	5	43	1			DFM	Welsh speaking at this time
Mold								
Ebenezer	101	12	150		H. Rees	1920	DFM	
Maesydre Mission	10	12	150				LC	
Buckley	10	4	40				LC	
Leeswood	24	5	40	1			DFM	
Wrexham								
Chester St.	184	10	80				L.C.	
Bradley Rd		9	46					
Holt								
Lodge	34	8	50				DFM	
Salem Newydd	35	2	50		W. Rowlands	1905		
Ponciau	100	20	200		J.P. Griffiths	1913	L.C	
Penycae	52	11	78				LC	

Figures included with Chester St.

Table 10 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>1922</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Cefn Mawr										
Bethel	81	9	130	2					DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	138	13	130	1					DFM/LC	
Llangollen	50	5	30			J.E. Griffiths	1921		LC	

Table 11

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>YEAR</u>		<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>1926</u>				
Holyhead						
New Park St, Baker St. Mission	151	Only the membership figures returned			LC	
Penrallt, Bangor	61	6	E.C. Jone:E	1920	C/LC	
Llandudno	125	7	W. Condy	1922	LC	
Colwyn Bay Princes Drive	78	4	J.A. Jones	1918	LC	
Old Colwyn	83	5	I.V. Morris	1922	L.C.	
Rhyl	48	7	G.E. Johnston		LC	
Flint	23	5			DFM/LC	
Shotton	41	5			DFM	Welsh speaking at this time
Mold						
Ebenezer	108	32			DFM	{Combined figures for
Maesydre Mission		250			LC	{Ebenezer & Maesydre
Buckley	5	3			LC	
Leeswood	35	4	W. Pierce	1921	DFM	
Wrexham						
Chester St.	106	18	V. Greenwood	1924	L.C.	
Bradley Rd		8				
Holt		1				
Lodge						
Salem Newydd	34	8			DFM	
Ponciau	91	15	J.P. Griffiths	1913	L.C	
Penycae	58	12	E.J. Davies	1923	LC	

Table 11 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	YEAR 1926		<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	NOTES
	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u> <u>CHLDN</u>					
Cefn Mawr							
Bethel	67	9 78	2			DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	122	11 120	4	O. Thomas	1925	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	56	5 40		J. Griffiths	1921	LC	

Table 12

<u>CHURCH</u>	YEAR		<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	NOTES
	1930									
Holyhead										
New Park St,	18	150	140	2	A.R. Morgan	1912	LC			
Baker St. Mission	10	80								
Penrallt, Bangor	4	20	62		H. Rees	1928	C/LC			
Llandudno	8	65	141				LC			
Colwyn Bay Princes Drive	5	46	91		W. Whitely	1926	LC			
Old Colwyn	10	90	82		J.F. Shearer	1929	L.C.			
Rhyl	6	38	62		W.R. Watkins	1927	LC			
Flint	4	45	25				DFM/LC			
Shotton	4	30	39		T. Morgan	1926	DFM	**		
Mold										
Ebenezer	10	75	104	1			DFM			
Maesydre Mission	13	150	10				LC			
Buckley	6	55	19		J.H. McKeracher	1929	LC			
Leeswood	4	45	31	1	W. Pierce	1921	DFM			
Llay	5	52	11				DFM			
Wrexham										
Chester St.	12	81	90				L.C.			
Bradley Rd	illegible	60	17				L.C.			
Holt	1	25	6				LC			
Lodge	8	115	58				DFM			
Salem Newydd	10	73	49				DFM/LC			
Ponciau	10	114	84		J.P. Griffiths	1913	L.C			
Penycae	2	15	46				LC			

** Linked to Penri Welsh Baptist church Chester

Table 12 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	YEAR 1930		<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	NOTES
	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts:</u>					
Cefn Mawr							
Bethel	105	14	145	J.E. GRIFFITHS	1929	DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	80	5	34	O. THOMAS	1925	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	46	2	15			LC	

TABLE 13

CHURCH	YEAR		MBRS	CHLDN	L-Ps	MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
	S.S.Ts.	1934							
Holyhead									
New Park St,	16	145	132			B.J. Morgan	1931	LC	
Baker St. Mission	9	108							
Penrallt, Bangor	5	51	70			C. Rogers	1931	C/LC	
Llandudno	9	83	129			W.H. Compton	1930	LC	
Colwyn Bay Princes Drive	6	44	107					LC	
Old Colwyn	6	50	95			J.F. Shearer	1929	L.C.	
Rhyl	5	28	47			E. Winnard	1931	LC	
Flint	4	32	23			T. Morgar **		DFM/LC	
Shotton			24					DFM/L:C Services now in English	
'Mold									
Ebenezer	9	85	100		2	T.G. Davies	1932	DFM	
Maesydre Mission	11	90	17		3	T.G. Davies		LC	
Buckley	7	75	16			J.Rogers	1932	LC	Note on J. Rogers at foot of table
Leeswood	4	20	14		1	W.Pierce	1921	DFM	
Llay	12	70	21						
Wrexham									
Chester St.	19	141	115			A.J. Watkins	1932	L.C.	
Bradley Rd	8	50				A.J. Watkins			
Holt	1	6				A.J. Watkins			
Lodge	9	80	49			M.R. Watkins		DFM	
Salem Newydd	10	79	55		2	M.R. Watkins		DFM/LC	

J. Rogers (Buckley) Previous church was at Combe Martin, Devon 1922-27. Now living at Devonian, Berwyn, Llangollen

**Also minister at Penri Welsh Baptist church Chester

TABLE 13 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>YEAR</u> 1934		<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>					
Ponciau	77	12	1	J.P. Griffiths	1913	L.C	
Penycae	65	9				LC	
Cefn Mawr							
Bethel	98	15	1			DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	98	11	2	O. Thomas	1925	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	38	1				LC	

Table 14

<u>CHURCH</u>	YEAR		<u>MBRS</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	NOTES
	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>						
Holyhead								
New Park St,	15	115	139		B.J. Morgan	1931	LC	
Baker St. Mission	7	84						
Penrallt, Bangor	5	32	61		J.T. Davies	1938	C/LC	
Llandudno	9	43	82				LC	
Colwyn Bay Princes Drive	6	54	166		L.P. Cook	1934	LC	
Old Colwyn	6	50	69		B.V. Parry	1938	L.C.	
Rhyl	8	50	65		E. Winnard	1931	LC	
Flint	6	50	38				DFM/LC	
Shotton	6	40	33				DFM	
Mold								
Ebenezer	9	80	105		T.G. Davies	1932	DFM	Mainly Welsh
Maesydre Mission	10	90	22		T.G. Davies	1932	LC	English
Buckley	4	30	6				LC	
Leeswood	4	20	22	1			DFM	services still in Welsh
Llay	No figures							
Wrexham								
Chester St.	13	113	119	5	A.J. Watkins	1932	L.C.	
Bradley Rd	9	60	17					
Holt	Figures included with Chester St.							
Lodge	6	50	50				DFM	
Salem Newydd	11	83	38	1			DFM/LC	

<u>CHURCH</u>	YEAR		<u>MBRS</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	NOTES
	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>						
Ponciau	15	93	92	2	J.P. Griffiths	1913	L.C	
Penycae	7	30	51				LC	
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	11	135	89		T.M. Jones	1937	DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	9	60	91		O. Thomas	1925	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	1	7	35				LC	

TABLE 15

YEAR 1944/45/46

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Holyhead								
New Park St,	80	7	60		H.J. Thomas	1943	LC	
Baker St. Mission		8	65					
Penrallt, Bangor	67	6	27	1			LC	No longer in Caerns Assoc
Llandudno	84	8	37				LC	
Colwyn Bay Princes Drive	115	11	99				LC	
Old Colwyn	87	9	56		I.V. Morris	1942	L.C.	
Rhyl	76	8	30				LC	
Flint	36	4	40				DFM/LC	
Shotton	24	4	12		E.V.W. Jones	1944	DFM	Wrexham District Minister
Mold								
Ebenezer	108	9	84		T.G. Davies	1932	DFM	Mainly Welsh speaking
Maesydre Mission	28	4	50				LC	English
Buckley	34	8	50				LC	
Leeswood	16	2	12	1	R. Ellis	1942	DFM	Welsh speaking
Llay	18	5	35		T.J. Hughes	1942	DFM	
Wrexham								
Chester St.	112	12	60	3	A.J. Watkins	1932	L.C.	
Bradley Rd	Included in Chester St. figures				A.J. Watkins			
Holt	1				A.J. Watkins			
Lodge	19	5	25		E.V.W. Jones	1944	DFM	Wrexham District Minister
Salem Newydd	44	10	98		E.V.W. Jones	1944	DFM/LC	Wrexham District Minister

TABLE 15 Cont'd

YEAR 1944/45/46

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Ponciau	103	10	50	2	B.L. James	1945	L.C	
Penycae	43	6	40		J.Lewis	1943	LC	Also minister at Salem (Welsh)
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	96	12	100	2	T.M. Jones	1937	DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	112	6	75	1	W.E. Edwards	1944	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	30				L. Coombs	1944	LC	

TABLE 16

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Holyhead								
New Park St,	140	9	70		H.J. Thomas	1943	LC	
Baker St. Mission	Baker Street not listed							
Penrallt, Bangor	58	5	25	2	E.G. Cole	1947	LC	
Llandudno	47	6	20				LC	
Colwyn Bay							LC	
Princes Drive	Not listed. Merged with Congregational church to form Union Church. A.E. Davies a Congregational minister							
Union church	209	6	50	2	A.E. Davies	1946	LC	
Old Colwyn	105	6	56		I.V. Morris	1942	L.C.	
Rhyl	83	10	44		R. Jones (HCF)	1947	LC	
Flint	34	4	18	1			DFM/LC	
Shotton	37	7	30	1			LC	Transferred from DFM assoc.
Mold								
Ebenezer	86	4	54		T.G. Davies	1932	DFM	Mainly Welsh speaking
Maesydre Mission	20	7	75				LC	English
Buckley	34	4	50		R.H. Jones	1948	LC	Honorary pastor
Leeswood	14	2	15	1			DFM	Welsh speaking
Llay	29	6	40		G. Thomas	1948	LC	
Wrexham	Left DFM Assoc between 1946 & 1950. G. Thomas not listed in BUGB Handbook							
Chester St.	105	8	60	6			L.C.	
Bradley Rd		8	50					
Holt	Figures included with ided with Bradley Rd.							
Lodge	27	5	50				DFM	
Salem Newydd	46	8	76				DFM/LC	

TABLE 16 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
			<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>				
Ponciau	130	9	86	2	D.E. Evans	1948	L.C	
Penycae	38	8	50		J. Lewis	1943	LC	Also minister at Salem (Welsh)
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	101	12	115		T.M. Jones	1937	DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	140	11	60		I.T. Davies	1945	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	25	6	30	3	L. Coombs		LC	

TABLE 17

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1955</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Holyhead			<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>				
New Park St,	132	12	72				LC	
Baker St. Mission	30	2	25					Figures included until 1960
Penrallt, Bangor	60	6	34	2	T.H. James	1954	LC	
Llandudno	57	5	23	1			LC	
Colwyn Bay								
Princes Drive	29	2	12				LC	Separated from Union in 1954
Union	152	4	30				LC	Does not include the seceders
Old Colwyn	108	8	40		I.V. Morris	1942	L.C.	
Llysfaen (Free church)	29	4	23		W.S. Shaw	1952		See note below
Rhyl	109	12	60		G. Ll. Jones	1951	LC	
Flint	29	3	9	1			DFM/LC	
Shotton	36	5	30	2			DFM	
Mold								
Ebenezer	90	6	64				DFM	Mainly Welsh speaking
Maesydre Mission	22	6	24	1			LC	English
Buckley	33	5	60		R.H. Jones		LC	R.H. Jones as honorary minister
Leeswood	17	2	14				DFM	Welsh speaking
Llay	31	6	30		G. Thomas	1947	LC	

Llysfaen listed as belonging to DFM. The church used Tabor Welsh Baptist church, and it was Tabor that belonged to the DFM. Llysfaen had talks with NWEBU, but did not join.

TABLE 17 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1955</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
			<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>				
Wrexham								
Chester St.	109	12	70		R. Drake	1953	L.C.	
Bradley Rd		8	40					
Holt		Now closed						
Lodge	9	4	36				DFM	
Salem Newydd	50	9	70				DFM	
Ponciau	85	11	60	3	D. Weller	1953	L.C	
Penycae	39	6	50		J. Lewis		LC	Minister at Salem (Welsh)
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	74	6	68		T.M. Jones	1937	DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	99	12	76	1	T.H. Morgan	1953	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	24						LC	

TABLE 18

CHURCH	YEAR		MBRS	S.S.Ts.	CHLDN	L-Ps	MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
	1960									
Holyhead	10	70	128				T.B. Hughes	1956		
New Park St,	8	40	76				G. Wynne	1958	LC	
Baker St. Mission	Figures no longer included as Baker St. had closed									
Penrallt, Bangor	6	37	86	2			A. Williams	1959	LC	
Llandudno	6	69	61				E.W. Mills	1957	LC	
Colwyn Bay										
Princes Drive	5	31	56	3			L. Moseley	1958	LC	L. Moseley was lay pastor
Union	5	25	175				A. Lake-Thomas	1956	LC	
Old Colwyn	8	35	96	2			I.V. Morris	1942	L.C.	
Llysfae	Llysfaen had now ceased as W.S. Shaw had moved away									
Rhyl	11	45	132				G.Ll. Jones	1951	LC	
Flint	3	21	26	1					DFM/LC	
Shotton	7	50	37				W.H. Hercock	1957	DFM	
Mold										
Ebenezer	4	45	71						DFM	Becoming more English speaking
Maesydre Mission	6	94	24	1					LC	English
Buckley	7	35	31						LC	
Leeswood	2	10	9						DFM	Becoming English speaking
Llay	3	20	20	1					LC	

TABLE 18 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>S.S.Ts.</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
			<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>				
Wrexham								
Chester St.	106	14	80	3			L.C.	
Bradley Rd	33	5	40	2				
Lodge	4	3	21				DFM	
Salem Newydd	41	6	37				DFM/LC	
Ponciau	93	9	87	2	R. Williams	1958	L.C	
Penycae	30	10	80		J. Lewis		LC	Minister at Salem (Welsh)
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	83	7	45	2	T.M. Jones	1937	DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	83	7	70		G.J. Jell	1956	DFM/LC	
Llangollen	25	1	12		J. Harding	1954	LC	

TABLE 19

**Children up to 14 and young people from 15-20 are now counted separately
The number of Sunday school teachers are no longer included**

CHURCH	YEAR 1965				MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
	MBRS	CHLDN	Y.Ps.	L-Ps				
Holyhead	133	20	40		T.B. Hughes	1956	LC	
Penrallt, Bangor	68	10	21	2	W,H, Jones	1962	LC	
Llandudno	60	23	9		A.C. Philips	1962	LC	
Colwyn Bay								
Princes Drive	77	83	10	4	L. Moseley	1958	LC	L. Moseley was lay pastor
Union	177	28		1	A. Lake Thomas	1956	LC	
Old Colwyn	56		3	1	A. Petty	1964	L.C.	
Rhyl	151	151	25		K. Edwards	1963		
Flint		Closed in 1962					LC	
Shotton	48	23	5		W.H. Hercock		LC	Minister Grosvenor Pk. Chester
Mold								
Ebenezer	67	19	10				DFM	Now English speaking
Maesydre Mission	12						LC	
Buckley	6	10	5				LC	
Leeswood	11	2	2				DFM	
Llay	18	20					LC	
Wrexham							LC	
Chester St.	112	30	15	3			L.C.	
Bradley Rd								
Lodge	10	1					DFM	
Salem Newydd	24	13	6				DFM/LC	

Figures included with Chester St.

TABLE 19 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
			<u>Y.Ps.</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>				
Ponciau	99	30	20	2	R. Williams	1958	L.C	
Penycae	16	25	10				LC	
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	85	35					DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	104	50	25				DFM/LC	
Llangollen							LC	

Closed in 1962

TABLE 20

<u>CHURCH</u>	YEAR		<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.P.s.</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	NOTES
	1970-71								
Holyhead	70	24	10	2				LC	
Penrallt, Bangor	76	10	8					LC	
Llandudno	40	40	12		A.C. Philips	1962		LC	
Colwyn Bay									
Princes Drive	89	62	22	2	D. Allingham			LC	
Union	197	18	8	2	A. Lake-Thomas	1956		LC	
Old Colwyn	108	40	15		G.J. Jell	1969		L.C.	
Rhyl	132	133	33		K. Edwards	1963		LC	
Shotton	37	31	12	2	J. Buckell			DFM	J. Buckell was lay pastor
Mold									
Ebenezer	74	60	12	7	I.D. Davies	1964		DFM	Now all English speaking
Maesydre Mission	12							LC	
Buckley	24	20	4	1				LC	
Leeswood	12	2			I.D. Davies			DFM	Now all English speaking
Llay	18	23	3					LC	
Wrexham									
Chester St.	118			4				L.C.	
Bradley Rd.	Had now left the NWEBU. Figures no longer included								
Lodge	Lodge had now closed								
Salem Newydd	18	9	7					DFM	
								DFM/LC	

TABLE 20 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1970-71</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
		<u>Y.Ps.</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>					
Ponciau	96	25	15	1	R. Williams	1958	L.C	
Penycae	13	87	11	3			LC	
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	48	18					DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	58	40	10				DFM/LC	

TABLE 21

CHURCH	YEAR 1974-75			MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
	MBRS	CHLDN Y.Ps.	L-Ps				
Holyhead	65	20	10	O.G. James	1970	LC	
Penrallt, Bangor	66	27	24	R. Jenkins	1971	LC	
Llandudno	41	16	3	A.C. Philips	1962	LC	
Colwyn Bay							
Princes Drive	65	72	19	W.H. Jones	1972	LC	W.H. Jones retirement pastorate
Union	181	12	6			LC	
Old Colwyn	83	35	10	G.J. Jell	1969	L.C.	
Rhyl	121	82	22	B. Harrison	1973	LC	
Shotton	25	30	5	J. Buckell		DFM	Now in Merseyside District
Mold							
Ebenezer	91	100	20	D. Wynn	1974	DFM	
Maesydre Mission	8					LC	
Buckley	20	48				LC	
Leeswood	11	5	2	D. Wynn		DFM	
Llay	14	24	4			LC	
Wrexham							
Chester St.	104	60	22	M.T. McCaw	1971	L.C.	
Salem Newydd	15	8	4				
Ponciau	82	20	8	R. Williams	1958	L.C	
Penycae	14	90	25			LC	
Cefn Mawr							
Bethel	37		2			DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	45	40	7	J.I. Jones		DFM/LC	

TABLE 21 Cont'd

YEAR 1974-75

The BUGB Directory also includes the churches listed under the DFM assoc.

The DFM returns differ from the Lancashire and Cheshire figures in most instances

No explanation is given and I have no answers

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.Ps.</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Colwyn Bay								
Princes Drive	79	57	14	1				
Union	198	20	6	2	A. Lake-Tha.			
Old Colwyn	95	45						
Rhyl	132	133	33					
Shotton	37	34	12		J. Buckell	1969		
Mold								
Ebenezer	91	108	20		D.I. Davies			Davies left in 1973
Maesydre Mission	8				D.I. Davies			Davies left in 1973
Buckley	24	20	4					
Leeswood					D.I. Davies			Davies left in 1973
Llay	16	25						
Wrexham								
Chester St.	89	30	14		T. M'Caw			Scribal error. M.T. M'Caw
Salem Newydd	16	16	16					
Ponciau	90	15	10					
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel	48	2						
Ebenezer	51	40	10					

TABLE 22

CHURCH	YEAR		MINISTER	STLD	ASSOC	NOTES
	CHLDN	Y.P.s.				
Holyhead	15	8	D.H. Lewis	1976	LC	
Penrallt, Bangor	112	30	R. Jenkins	1971	LC	
Llandudno	5	4	A.C. Philips	1962	LC	
Colwyn Bay						
Princes Drive	99	36	P. Radford	1976	LC	
Union	14	2	T. Francis	1974	LC	
Old Colwyn	35	15	G.J. Jell	1969	L.C.	
Rhyl	86	24	B. Harrison	1973	LC	
Shotton	35	13	J. Buckell		DFM	J. Buckell Lay pastor
Mold						
Ebenezer	100	20	D. Wynn	1974	DFM	
Maesydre Mission	8				LC	
Buckley	36				LC	
Leeswood	11	2	D. Wynn	1974	DFM	
Llay	14	4			LC	
Wrexham						
Chester St.	113	10	M.T. M'Caw	1971	L.C.	
Salem Newydd	15	4			DFM/LC	

TABLE 22 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.Ps.</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>1977-78</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Ponciau	63	30	4				T. Bartlam	1975	L.C	
Penycae	17	110	20						LC	
Cefn Mawr										
Bethel	30						T. Bartlam	1975	DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	45	35	5				T. Bartlam		DFM/LC	

Ponciau is entered under the R hos/Cefn Fellowship

TABLE 23

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>YEAR 1982-83</u>			<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.Ps.</u>				
Holyhead	52	10	15			LC	
Penrallt, Bangor	75	30	12	P. Baker	1979	LC	
Llandudno	28	7	1			LC	
Colwyn Bay							
Princes Drive	87	54	15	P, Radford	1976	LC	
Union	91	13		J. Huntington	1980	LC	
Old Colwyn	75	45	8	G.J. Jell	1969	L.C.	
Rhyl	117	70	12	K. Payne	1981	LC	
Shotton	28	27	4			LC	
Mold							
Ebenezer							
Maesydre Mission							
Buckley	7	30				DFM	
Leeswood						LC	
Llay						LC	
Wrexham						DFM	
Chester St.	90			S. Heap	1980	L.C.	
Salem Newydd	15	8	4				
Ponciau	59	16	3		1975	L.C	
Penycae	21	60	5			LC	
Cefn Mawr							
Bethel	14	14			1975	DFM/LC	
Ebenezer	31	26	5			DFM/LC	

Maesydre had merged with Ebenezer the parent church
which had withdrawn from the BUW

TABLE 24

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>YEAR 1987-88</u>			<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.P.s.</u>				
Holyhead	18		6	I. Colman		LC	
Penrallt, Bangor	71	34	20	P, Baker	1979	LC	
Llandudno	22	4		R. Monk	1984	LC	
R. Monk is listed as a student connected with Old Colwyn and Princes Drive between 1980-82							
Colwyn Bay							
Princes Drive	116	70	10	K. Foster	1884	LC	
Union	83		6	J. Huntington	1980	LC	
Old Colwyn	58			G.J. Jell	1969	L.C.	
Rhyl	194	80	20	K. Payne	1981	LC	
Shotton	30	28				LC	Mrs. F. Buckell
Mold	Mrs. Buckell had been appointed lay pastor following the death of her husband						
Ebenezer	Mold withdrawn from BUW						
Maesydre Mission							
Buckley	14	26	5	R. Marshall	1986	LC	
Leeswood	R. Marshall belongs to the Baptist Bible Fellowship and was inducted by Tevor Hubbard in 1986						
Llay	15	65	4	D. Young		LC	D. Young lay pastor
Wrexham	Figures not in the BUIGB Directory						
Chester St.	102	28		B. Blake-Lobb		L.C.	Non-accredited minister
Salem Newydd	DFM/LC						

TABLE 24 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.Ps.</u>	YEAR	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	NOTES
Ponciau	65	34	4	1987-88		A.L. Ellis		L.C	A. Ellis a retired minister
Penycae	25	28	9					LC	
Cefn Mawr									
Bethel	10		2					LC	
Ebenezer	26	9	2					LC	

TABLE 25

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>YEAR</u> 1991-92		<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.Ps.</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>Y.Ps.</u>							
Holyhead	29	1	7			M. Jones			
Penrallt, Bangor	78	6	45			P. Baker	1979		
Llandudno	21		3			M. Lloyd	1991		
Colwyn Bay									
Princes Drive	175	28	89			K. Foster	1984		P. Levers asst. minister
Union	71					J. Huntington	1980		
Old Colwyn	61	23	69			G.J. Jell	1969		
Rhyl	178	18	81			K. Payne	1981		
Shotton	26					E. Davies			Lay pastor
Mold Ebenezer	118	30	30			D. Wynne	1974		Figs from DFM
Buckley	24					R. Marshall	1986		
Leeswood									R. Marshall belongs to the Baptist Bible Fellowship and was inducted by Tevor Hubbard in 1986
Llay	14	40	40			L. Quade			Figures not available. Not yet in BUGB. Not given by DFM
Wrexham									
Chester St.	62	9	19						
Salem Newydd	Closed								
Ponciau	65	4	36						
Penycae									Withdrawn
Cefn Mawr									
Bethel	18								
Ebenezer	18								

TABLE 26

<u>CHURCH</u>	1995-96			<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	NOTES
	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.Ps.</u>					
Holyhead	34	15	5		G. Williams	1992		
Penrallt, Bangor	91	46	20		P. Baker	1979		
Llandudno	22	6	6		F. Halstead	1994		
Colwyn Bay								
Princes Drive	195	94	50					
Union	57				J. Huntington	1980		
Old Colwyn	65	39	14		B. Strangward	1993		
Rhyl	168	98	25					
Shotton	15	14	5		F. Buckell	1983		
Mold Ebenezer		Withdrawn						
Buckley	24				R. Marshall	1986		
Leeswood	37	43	26		M. M'Caw			
Llay	15	56	18		R. Redock	1994		
Wrexham								
Chester St.	71	17	5		N. Thomas	1993		
Salem Newydd		Now closed						
Ponciau	64	28	4					
Penycae		Withdrawn						
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel		Closed						
Ebenezer	10							

TABLE 27

2000-2002

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>MBRS</u>	<u>CHLDN</u>	<u>Y.Ps.</u>	<u>L-Ps</u>	<u>MINISTER</u>	<u>STLD</u>	<u>ASSOC</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Holyhead	26	10	2					
Penrallt, Bangor	73	50	18		P. Cousins	1998		
Llandudno	23	4	1		F. Halstead	1994		
Colwyn Bay								
Princes Drive	221	110	75		J. Wilson	1996		
Union	51				J. Huntington	1980		
Old Colwyn	36	19	4		B. Strangward	1993		
Rhyl								
Grapevine	21	23	5		I. Fulcher	1999	NWBA	Plant from Sussex St
Sussex St	125	65	22		D. Cave	1999		
Shotton	20	35	3		F. Buckell	1983		
Mold Ebenezer								
Buckley	24							
Leeswood	38	51	36		M. M'Caw	1983		
Llay	15	58	18		R. Redock	1994		
Wrexham								
Chester St.	43	21	3		J. Wells	1996		
Salem Newydd	closed							
Ponciau	61	13						
Penycae								Now withdrawn
Cefn Mawr								
Bethel								Closed
Ebenezer								Closed

TABLE 28

THE RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF 1851

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>ACCOMMODATION</u>	<u>MORNING</u>		<u>AFTERNOON</u>		<u>EVENING</u>		<u>NOTES</u>
		Adults	children	Adults	children	Adults	children	
Wrexham								
Chester Street	Free 140 Others 119	75	41	40	40	118		
	Average attendance	90	57	15	15	135		
Bank Street	Free 75	40	22	34	42	20		The Campbellite seceders from Chester Street
Allington								
	All free			30				Nr. Rossett Chapel erected 1791
Holt								
	Free 200	17	17	17	15	30		
Cefn Mawr								
Big Chapel	Free 42 Others 354	300		600		600		The Welsh chapel from which Ebenezer Cefn Mawr emerged
	Standing 205	Ave. gen. congregation 700, scholars 398						Scotch Baptist or Campbellite??
Christian Baptist	All free	10		28		30		
Rhosllanerchrugog								
Bethel	Free 150	50		78		82		Traditionally Scotch Baptist We continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and of breaking of bread and in prayers'. Building erected before 1800
Penrhos Chapel								
	Free 121 Others 43		201	711	801			
	Standing 1140 men							

TABLE 28 Cont'd

THE RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF 1851

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>ACCOMMODATION</u>	<u>MORNING</u> Adults children	<u>AFTERNOON</u> Adults children	<u>EVENING</u> Adults children	<u>NOTES</u>
Conchy	24 feet by 18	7	24	No service	Onamatpoeic version of Ponciau?

TABLE 29
CHURCH

	1922	1926	1930	1934	1939	
Holyhead	124	151	140	132	139	
New Park St, Baker St. Mission	40	Figures subsumed with New Park Street				
Penrallt, Bangor	46	61	55	70	61	
Llandudno	92	125	141	129	82	
Colwyn Bay Princes Drive	78	78	91	107	166	
Old Colwyn	40	83	82	95	69	
Rhyl	56	48	62	47	65	
Flint	23	23	25	23	38	
Shotton	51	41	39	24	33	
Mold						
Ebenezer	101	108	104	100	105	
Maesydre Mission	10	5	10	17	22	
Buckley	10	35	19	16	6	
Leeswood	24	N/A	31	14	22	
Llay			11	21	N/A	
Wrexham						
Chester St.	184	106	90	115	119	
Bradley Rd			17		17	
Holt			6			
Lodge	34	N/A	58	49	50	
Salem Newydd	35	34	49	55	38	
Ponciau	100	91	84	77	92	
Penycae	52	58	46	65	51	

TABLE 29 Cont'd

<u>CHURCH</u>	1922	1926	1930	1934	1939
Cefn Mawr					
Bethel	81	67	105	98	89
Ebenezer	138	122	80	98	91
Llangollen	50	56	46	38	35

TABLE 30

COMPARATIVE FIGURES 1946 - 2000

CHURCH	1946	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	
Holyhead							
New Park St,	80	140	132	76	133	70	
Baker St. Mission			30	closed			
Penrallt, Bangor	67	58	60	86	68	76	
Llandudno	84	47	57	61	60	40	
Colwyn Bay							
Princes Drive	115	(a)	(b) 29	56	77	89	(a) Princes Drive was merged in Union church
Union		209	152	175	177	197	(b) Princes Drive re-opened in its own right
Old Colwyn	87	105	108	96	56	108	(c) Llysfaen existed from 1954-58
Llysfaen			29	©	closed		(d) withdrawn
Rhyl	76	83	109	132	151	132	(e) merged with Ebenezer
Flint	36	34	29	26	closed		(f) figures not available
Shotton	24	37	36		48	37	
Mold							
Ebenezer	108	86	90	71	67	74	
Maesydre Mission	28	20	22	24	12	12	
Buckley	34	34	33	31	6	24	
Leeswood	16	14	17	9	11	12	
Llay	18	29	31	20	18	18	
Wrexham							
Chester St.	112	105	109	106	112	118	
Bradley Rd				33			Now withdrawn
Holt	1	Closed					
Lodge	19	27	9	N/A	10	Closed	
Salem Newydd	44	46	50	41	24	18	

TABLE 30 Cont'd

CHURCH	1975	1977	1982	1988	1992	1995	2000
Holyhead							
New Park St, Baker St. Mission	65	57	52	18	29	34	26
Penrallt, Bangor	66	65	75	71	78	91	73
Llandudno	41	48	28	22	21	22	23
Colwyn Bay							
Princes Drive	65	64	87	116	175	195	221
Union	181	135	91	83	71	57	51
Old Colwyn	83	92	75	58	61	65	36
Llysfaen	closed						
Rhyl	121	118	117	194	178	168	125
Flint							
Shotton	25	26	28	30	26	15	20
Mold							
Ebenezer	91	91	(d)		118	withdrawn	
Maesydre Mission	8	8	(e)				
Buckley	20	20	7	14	24	24	24
Leeswood	11	11		(f)		37	38
Llay	14	14	11	15	14	15	15
Wrexham							
Chester St.	104	113	90	102	62	71	43
Bradley Rd	withdrawn						
Holt	closed						
Lodge	closed						
Salem Newydd	15	15	15	closed			

(d) withdrawn
(e) merged with Ebenezer
(f) figures not available

TABLE 30 Cont'd	1946	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	
<u>CHURCH</u>							
Ponciau	103	130	85	93	99	96	
Penycae	43	38	39	30	16	13	
Cefn Mawr							(d) withdrawn
Bethel	96	101	74	83	85	48	(e) merged with Ebenezer
Ebenezer	112	140	99	83	104	58	(f) figures not available
Llangollen	116	94	24	25	closed		
	1975	1977	1982	1988	1992	1995	2000
Ponciau	82	63	59	65	65	64	61
Penycae	14	17	21	25	(e)		
Cefn Mawr							
Bethel	37	30	14	26	18		closed
Ebenezer	45	45	31	25	18	10	closed
Llangollen	closed						

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