

## **Carmel Tresimwn**

(translated from History of Welsh Independent Churches, Dai Rees and Thomas)

In the deeds\* signed Nov 4<sup>th</sup> 1834, after locating the piece of land there follows the statement. . . “Whereon the said parties have commenced erecting a chapel meeting house”. In the Nonconformist publication *Y Diwygiwr* (The Reformer) of 1835 there is an account of the opening of the new chapel. Services were held on Thursday and Friday July 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 1835; an evening service on Thursday and three services on Friday – a total number of 11 sermons were preached. The measurements of the building were 69 feet by 21 feet, with a small gallery.

This was not the earliest record of the presence of Independents in the locality for in June 1786 15 persons licensed the house of Edward Morris, Horseland (Rhyslön), Llantrithyd as a meeting house. These were members of Aberthin near Cowbridge, who lived in the vicinity of Bonvilston.

The origin of Carmel was because Revd Benjamin Morgan of Taihirion did not find favour among his flock. He became friendly with a group gathered together in a stable belonging to the Old Post. Mr Morgan, together with Benjamin and Mary John, Lewis and Ann Davies, James Williams and his sister Mary Jenkins were joined in worship my members from Maendy who lived in the neighbourhood. Mr Morgan persuaded them to build a chapel. They had difficulty in getting land because the landowners were hostile towards the Nonconformists.

By the time it was built the chapel cost £400, and the members were not wealthy; these people were to be burdened with debt for many years. Mr Morgan did not remain long at Carmel and it appears that he severed every connection with the ministry and eventually with religion.

Mr John Davies took over the pastorate jointly with Llantrisant and he travelled to and fro between Llantrisant and Bonvilston for three years, when he moved to Aberdare. He was effective in raising the numbers of worshippers, but the debt on the building was still a problem. Mr Daniel Jones was ordained here on July 26 and 27 1837 and he remained for three years before moving to Bethesda Merthyr.

In 1841 Mr Rees Evans was ordained to the pastorate and he was minister at Carmel for six years; he then resigned from the pastorate and emigrated to Australia. There is no evidence of much progress during his ministry; indeed the chapel's debt was getting worse as the interest was increasing the capital sum each year. In 1845 they were at their wits end and were so dispirited that they decided to sell the chapel to the Baptists. However on the night when the all-important meeting was to be held, they could not find the key to the building. The lady who hid the key was the aforementioned Mary John. She and her husband Benjamin were ideal examples of the enthusiasts of early nonconformity. Not only were they prominent in the services of the church, but also in the service of the church. It is on record that they sold two pigs (their main sustenance as a family) and gave the money towards the effort to reduce the chapel's debt.

In 1850 Mr James Thomas began to visit the place regularly to conduct services. With a few years he was invited to become the minister of a congregation of 14 members, mostly poor in worldly goods, also there was a standing debt of £160. He was inducted as pastor on April 20-21, 1853 and he did not spare himself in the difficult task of clearing the debt. He would walk through the area, calling in houses and selling tickets for tea parties, and giving lectures, the proceeds of all these activities going to the debt fund. In doing all this, he succeeded in winning the confidence and sympathy of most people in the neighbourhood.

As a result of these efforts the debt was cleared and renovations to the building were made and paid for, so that late in 1860 or early in 1861 special services were held to celebrate the joyous occasion. Carmel had many more ministers at the end of the first decade of Mr Thomas's ministry than the 14 who had ventured to ordain him in 1850. Even in 1859 his salary was only 3s a month and for the first nine years of his ministry he worked hard during the week at Biglis farm near Dinas Powys.

In 1860 the burial ground was extended and a stable built nearby. In 1874 new trustees were appointed and also the minister received a gift of £55 as a mark of appreciation for his loyal and faithful ministry. In 1877 the chapel was rebuilt and the re-opening services were held on November 21 and 22. £178 0s 7d of the total cost of £318 0s 7d had been paid before those services.

Revd James Thomas died on Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 1879 aged 63. He was buried in the chapel burial-ground and members and adherents paid for a tombstone on which is carved: "In loving memory of the Rev James Thomas, who died Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 1879, 63 years of age. He was a faithful minister of this church for twenty seven years".

Mr William Edgar Evans, the present minister, came to Carmel a year after the passing of Mr Thomas and was ordained on Sept 28 and 29, 1880. He maintains that his ministry is remarkable due to its length, almost 44 years, that in Tennyson's words 'For men may come and men may go  
But I go on for ever'.

But it is not the length of his ministry that accounts for the fact that he is known and regarded as 'the Bishop of the Vale'. He is a man who is concerned about the whole neighbourhood, of whatever denomination or none. He diligently feeds the lambs, having been very prominent in the educational life of the Vale and for many years a governor of Barry County School. Mr Evans is a 'Cardi', born in New Quay; he received his theological training at Bala College.

Deacons: Carmel has been well served by sincere and faithful deacons.

Benjamin John has already been mentioned. His son, William John, Ffos y crydd, was noted for his faithfulness to all services and although he lived 4 miles away yet as a rule he would be the first to arrive at the chapel.

John Smith, Wallace Newydd, had been brought up in the neighbourhood of Groeswen, between Pontypridd and Caerphilly. That chapel had been built by the Calvinistic Methodists in 1742 and became a Welsh Independent chapel in 1745. Mr Smith had been nurtured in the faith under the ministry of prominent nonconformist ministers (whose tombs are in the chapel's burial-ground and so numerous that it has been called the Bunhill Fields of Wales). It is therefore not surprising that he became

an ardent Independent, and so when he came to the Vale in 1858 he was thereafter a staunch member and deacon of Carmel. He had experienced the power of a religious revival at Groeswen in 1831-2 and its warmth and glow was reflected in his life to the end of his days.

John Rowland, Walterston, also came from Groeswen, also arriving in the Vale in 1880. He was a quiet man yet what he said was most effective. "A small window but a large store house". His early death was a sad loss to his family and to the church. Robert Griffiths, Village Farm, Bonvilston. He was a quiet man who served the church faithfully. He also died rather young.

Present Officers – James Price, who has been secretary for almost 50 years

Evan Griffiths, son of Robert Griffiths

TJ Dunn, son-in-law of John Smith

Trithyd Evans, son of the minister Revd WE Evans

Carmel also gave deacons to two other churches: Mr TW David, JP< Ely Rise to Charles St., Cardiff, and Mr Rees Davies, former schoolmaster at Llancarfan, to Bethesda, Barry. There have also been excellent ladies who have readily helped in many ways and their children are holding the flag aloft today.

\*INDENTURE made on 4<sup>th</sup> day of November 1834

between Thomas Williams of Newton House, Llanblethian, esquire, and Revd Benjamin Morgan, psh of Bonvilston, clerk; Benjamin John, Bonvilston, labourer, John Loughor, Bonvilston, labourer, Christopher Perkins, Bonvilston, gentleman, James Williams, llancarfan, innkeeper, John Morgan, Llangattock-juxta-Neath, farmer, revd Wm Williams, Brecon, clerk, Edmund Williams, Llantarnam, Mon, labourer, John Lewis, Llantarnam, Mon, labourer.

. . . . 23 yards by 9 yards . . . . have commenced erecting a chapel or meeting house . . . . by a society of Protestant Dissenters of the Independent denomination . . . . to permit the sd chapel to be used as a schoolroom for the instruction of children in the English and welsh language, writing and arithmetic. . . .