

**BETHEL CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**EGLWYS DISGYBLION CRIST**  
**RHOSLLANERCHRUGOG**  
**and some nearby sister churches**



A SHORT HISTORY

David M. Young

© David Martin Young

[www.primitivemethodism.com](http://www.primitivemethodism.com)

[www.bethelrhos.com](http://www.bethelrhos.com)

ISBN: 978-9-69-289250-6

2023

printed at the University of Chester

## **BRITAIN**

We learn the information in this section from Watters (1940):

The first congregations of the body known as "Churches of Christ" came into existence in Great Britain and Ireland early in the nineteenth century. At the same time similar congregations were being formed in America, where they have become best known by the term "Disciples of Christ". The origins and the subsequent history of the British and American groups have a good deal in common, and yet show a considerable degree of diversity. The American "Disciples" (who have developed into the largest Christian denomination claiming American origin) have had numerous historians; Watters' is the first attempt to write the British history. There will of necessity be references to the American movement, but only in so far as is required to shed light on the development in Britain.

The earliest congregations in Britain sprang up, without knowledge of each other, in various parts of Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales; nor did they know, for more than twenty years, of the similar churches in America. This suggests that the times must have been ripe for such a religious movement. Separate churches are known to have existed at Wrexham, Shrewsbury, Bristol, Grangemouth, and probably London. The photo shows the house in Cox Lane, Allington, where the church began that later built a chapel in Rossett.

Meetings in Cox Lane were held in the room immediately to the right entrance hall.



A perusal of the "Christian Messenger" during a few years [from about 1835 reveals the formation of other "Churches of Christ ", including Newark; Glasgow, Dundee, Perth, Banff, Turiff, Liverpool, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Lincoln; Edinburgh, Cupar, Dunfermline, Montrose, Dumfries, Chester, and Banbury. Most of these churches were formed from the Scotch Baptists, some from choice and others because of expulsion. The main differences are set out later in this booklet.

### *Scotch Baptists*

The Scotch Baptists owe their origin to Archibald McLean (1733-1812). He and Robert Carmichael knew of no Baptists in Scotland (although there were in fact a small number). Carmichael went to London and was baptised by John Gill in October 1765, and some months later he baptised McLean and some others, and together they founded a Baptist church in Edinburgh, with Carmichael as elder.

Three years later McLean became co-elder, and a small number of Scotch Baptist churches were founded in other places in Scotland.

After Carmichael died in 1774 McLean became the leader. He taught that the doctrines and practices of a church must be taken literally and in detail from the New Testament, with at least two (unpaid) elders, and deacons to oversee finance and business. Decisions were taken on the basis of unanimous votes by the members. Communion (which was restricted to baptised believers) was to be held every Sunday and was central to the service, but if there was no elder present, there should be no Communion. Other practices included abstention from eating blood, the kiss of peace, and foot-washing as part of hospitality. Each local church was independent, and it is said that justifying faith was perceived intellectually as 'bare belief' with little or no attention given to a changed life and progress in holiness and moral living.

McLean held a Calvinistic view of soteriology, and believed that, although the Gospel should be offered to all, its

proclamation consisted of declaring the facts of the person and work of Christ.

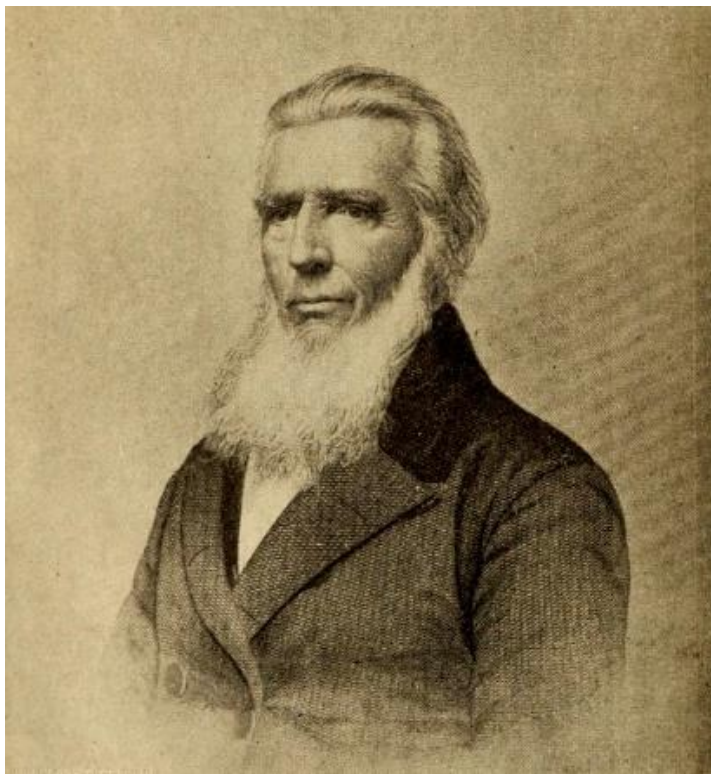
Their emphasis was on reforming churches in an attempt to recapture primitive Christianity, rather than on the conversion of the unchurched masses. Andrew Fuller, who did much to soften the Calvinism of English Particular Baptists, regarded them as contentious, given to 'splitting hairs' and tending to division, self-righteousness, and a judgmental spirit.

Scotch Baptist views made their way into England via Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire and Newcastle, and spread also to Nottingham, Beverley and London.

### *Alexander Campbell*

Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) grew up in Northern Ireland among fragmented and sometimes mutually hostile parties of Presbyterians, Anglicans and Roman Catholics. He emigrated to the United States at the age of 21, where he became a Baptist minister.

He became persuaded that creeds and doctrinal statements of belief were divisive, grew concerned to work for the unity of all Christians, and became a leader in a reform movement which aimed at restoring the church to the simplicity of early Christian belief and worship, including restoring the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper to their original place in the church, as he understood them.



*Alexander Campbell (flickr.com, public domain)*

## WALES

From Chester Scotch Baptist views spread into North Wales, and were adopted by a number of Calvinistic Baptist churches, especially by John Richard Jones (1765-1834) of the church at Ramoth, Llanfrothen. Jones was widely in demand as a preacher, and for a while almost all the North Wales churches adopted Scotch Baptist views, until Christmas Evans led a reaction.

McLean first corresponded with J. R. Jones in 1795. Jones became aware of the Campbellite movement in America in 1833, and believed that the American movement had similarities to the Scotch Baptists. He began to correspond with Alexander Campbell and to circulate Campbell's ideas among the Scotch Baptists through a journal which he began in 1835, in which, among other material, he published a lot of Campbell's writings.

However, after sixteen months of publishing the journal, he became aware of differences between the Campbellites and the Scotch Baptists. Major points of difference are set out later in this booklet.

Nonetheless, by the time Jones ceased publishing Campbellite views, he had introduced the Scotch Baptists to Campbell's beliefs and programme, and by the 1840s there was much disturbance among the North Wales Scotch Baptist churches about the new ideas, and soon fourteen Campbellite churches had been formed in North and Mid Wales, including one at Criccieth where Prime Minister Lloyd George was reared, and



it was from the Scotch Baptists that the Campbellite churches mainly emerged.

Similar churches already existed elsewhere, including from the late 1820s, in Wrexham, where the church had never been Scotch Baptist; and the church at Allington, Cox Lane, Marford (or Allington, or Hoseley, or even Horseley, then in Denbighshire), which met in a room in a house, with John Davies as its first preacher.

J. D. Davies (1941 pages 62-70) relates that it appears that the “reformed” Baptists can be traced back to before the time of Campbell’s movement, and linked later with visits of McLean to Chester and Wrexham in 1797 and before that. William Jones, son of a woman from Mollington (north of Chester), was baptised in Chester by McLean in 1786.

It was not until 1842 that the first Annual Conference of Campbellite churches was held in Edinburgh, when fifty Churches reported a membership of 1,300.

There is a record of John Davies of Mollington, a son of the fourth Charles Davies of the farm in Cox Lane - one of the pioneers of the movement, and chairman of the Campbellite conferences in Edinburgh (1842) and Glasgow (1848) - baptising in the River Alyn before 1817, and the church being formed in 1809, although the formation of churches aware that their views were ‘Campbellite’ did not begin in Wales before 1836.

We learn of John Davies also in the letters of Alexander Campbell which he wrote from England to his daughter

Clarinda; he writes of the welcome John and Mary Davies gave him at their home The Willows, and that "Our brother .. has done much to introduce and circulate our writings throughout the length & breadth of this land.

In 1870 the churches formally commended the name "Churches of Christ" at the Annual Meeting. In the twentieth century the churches gradually became more open to other Christian churches; membership continued to grow till 1930, but then halved by 1955, and halved again by 1975.

## RHOSLLANERCHRUGOG

*Stream 1: 1836-40, John Davies, Joshua Rogers, Dafydd Dafis*

A visit to Rhos by Robert Rees of Rhaeadr y Parc, Llanfrothen, who was widely influential in the debate between the Scotch and Campbellite Baptists of North Wales, may have been the immediate cause of the division in Rhos. From about 1836 there was fervent debate at the Scotch Baptist chapel built in 1817 known as Soar, Aberderfyn, concerning Alexander Campbell's teachings.

On the first Sunday of 1840 about twenty of the members left and formed a new church for which they adopted the name Disciples of Christ (Disgyblion Crist). In a letter to Robert Rees of Llanfrothen, dated Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 1840, John Edwards the cobbler, Hafodybwch, wrote like this: "Those at Rhos have become disunited since yesterday."

When the first members left Soar Scotch Baptist chapel, they held their services in the loft of the Bull's Head public house. The leader was John Davies of Rhos. This John Davies (1809-1888), not to be confused with the John Davies of Allington and Mollington, was the son of Dafydd Dafis of Yr Onnen Fechan<sup>1</sup>. He and his brother Dafydd were apprenticed with Roger Stephen, the first deacon of the Scotch Baptist church, and that was probably the contact by which they became

---

<sup>1</sup> There is an Onnen Fechan at Bronwylfa, just outside Rhos.

Baptists. John Davies was a shoe-maker or cobbler, gifted preacher, writer, and eager student of scripture.

Joshua Rogers was one of the founders, also Dafydd Dafis senior, who had come from Llandderfel, near Bala, to work in the area and who died in 1913. The *Bible Advocate* (6<sup>th</sup> June 1913) supplies some information about David 'Dafydd' Davies, also known as David Bala Davies, extracted here:

Davies died on 26rd March 1913 at the age of 66. He was brought up among the Calvinistic Methodists, but "went sadly astray ... and fell under the baneful influence of strong drink."

However, at some point he walked from his home in Llandderfel to Rhosllanerchrugog in search of work.

The time came when he "became a changed character, gave his heart to the Lord, joined the Church of Christ in Rhos, and never looked back." He became "much appreciated and very popular among his fellow workmen – the colliers - ... was Chairman of their Sick Society, Treasurer of their funds, their counsellor and leader for more than 25 years."

In the church he was "a father in Israel." The afflictions of losing his wife and his son of 21 years of age brought him closer to the Lord, and "For years he was the real shepherd of the church in Rhos, interesting himself in and looking after the spiritual welfare of its members" as he served in the office of deacon. "The prosperity of the church in Rhos was largely attributable to his persistent and watchful care over it."

The only language he spoke with fluency was Welsh, but he loved to meet brethren in any part of the land, such as London or Bolton where he went for work or family reasons.



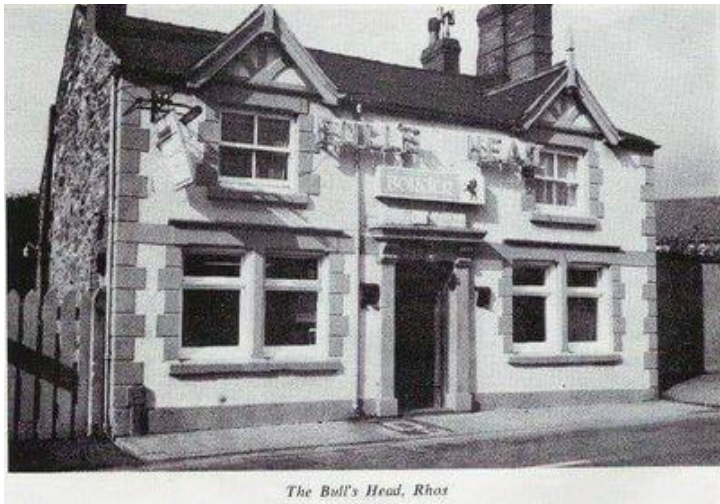
*David Davies' home (and mother), Llandderfel*

To return to the rift with Soar, the younger members went with John Davies, and established the Campbellite cause, but the older members remained with the old minister at Soar. This is referred to in a letter of 20<sup>th</sup> August 1840 from Thomas Humphrey to John Salusbury:

They have departed from each other in Rhos and have finally gone their separate ways. At present there are

fifteen with Stephen Jones, and twenty with John Davies. We think the meeting house [Soar] is in the possession of the older group.

However, the church's minute book says that twenty-five followed John Davies while twelve remained with Stephen Jones.



*The Bull's Head, Rhos*  
*The Bull's Head [photo supplied by Philip Phillips, Facebook]*



*Soar, Ponciau*<sup>2</sup>

*Stream 2, 1841-5: John Williams, Edward Clarke*

Maybe the first to draw attention to Campbell's views in the Rhos area was John Williams, translator in 1842 of Campbell's translation of the New Testament, under the title *Oraclau Bywiol*. He came to Rhos in 1836, and was minister of the Baptist church at Penrhos. He was well versed in the writings of Alexander Campbell. In 1839 he translated Campbell on the remission of sins, and his preaching was often on similar lines

---

<sup>2</sup> When Soar closed in the 1990s, the remaining members decided unanimously to sell it at a convenient price to the Albanian Evangelical Mission (Wrexham) for conversion to office use and literature store, to keep it in Christian work, but as all the trustees were dead, the Charity Commission took over and it was sold as a house.

to Campbell's, especially on the matter of baptism and its role in reconciliation with God.

Cynddelw<sup>3</sup> mentions John Williams' family-like personality, and pictures "dozens of people sitting around him, as the Rhos miners did – on their heels - and him with his constant companion, his "long pipe", in the centre of them, as an oracle of faith on every question." He desired to spread Campbell's views. John Williams served in Rhos 1836-1841.

John Davies was a man of similarly friendly tendencies to John Williams, and a kinship quickly developed between them. In Davies, Williams not only gained again a disciple who was eager for the new teaching, but also gained by him financial help to bear the expense of publishing the *Oraclau*. It is likely that this is the channel through which the Campbellite argument came 'to disturb the waters' in the church at Soar, Aberderfyn, mentioned above.

When John Williams left Rhos to move to Newtown in 1841, some members, led by Edward Clarke (1793-1868), a smith, left the Baptists of Penrhos, and met for a while separately from those who had been meeting in the Bull's Head. By 1845 they had formed a Disciples of Christ church, though in 1847 there were only about twenty members. They eventually

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert Ellis (1812–1875), known by his bardic name Cynddelw, was attracted to Campbell's beliefs, and his translation of parts of 'The Christian System' appeared in *Seren Gomer* in 1845-6. He was a Welsh language poet, editor, and lexicographer; he was also a Baptist minister: from 1836 to 1840 at Llanellian-yn-Rhos and Llanddulas, Denbighshire; from 1838 to 1840 Glyn Ceiriog in the Ceiriog Valley; from 1847 to 1862 at Tredegar, Monmouthshire; and from 1862 until his death in 1875, at Caernarfon.



joined the congregation led by John Davies, meeting at Bethel, Campbell Street.

### *The Debate: Scotch Baptist/Campbellite*

The emphases on which Campbell and McLean agreed (writes J. Rhosydd Williams) were:

- the inspiration of the Bible as the word of God
- the deity of Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith
- the Church as the Body of Christ
- faith as an act of the understanding within the order of grace
- the form (immersion) and requirements (repentance and faith) of baptism
- the centrality of the Lord's Supper in worship on the first day of the week
- the plurality of elders in each church
- the priesthood of all believers.

Differences between the two parties centred on:

- the Law of Moses
- original sin
- faith, repentance and baptism for the remission of sin
- whether the ordained ministry is alone authorised to give the Lord's Supper and to baptise
- sectarianism and Christian unity.

The Campbellite movement held back on principle from formulating its beliefs and practices in a written creed or doctrinal confession of faith, believing such documents cause division among the Lord's people. The Churches believe in unity in essentials and liberty of conscience in matters that are doubtful – with charity in all matters.

Davies (1941) lists a number of differences between Scotch Baptist and the Campbellite teachings. The Campbellites maintained that regeneration takes place at the moment of baptism. It is their teaching regarding baptism which makes them distinct not only from Scotch Baptists, but from all other Christian bodies.

Also, Scotch Baptists maintained a doctrine of 'sovereign grace' and particular redemption, whereas Campbellites held general redemption, asserting that particular redemption disarms the Gospel and makes God a liar.

Robinson (1946) supplies a fuller outline of Campbellite beliefs and practices, explaining that the essential witness of the new movement consisted of four main points or aims:

- the necessity of New Testament Christianity, but not defined by formal creeds or confessions
- the unity of the Body of Christ, the Church, as contrasted with sectarianism
- the restoration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper to their rightful place
- use of the gifts of every member of the church.

Robinson expands on some aspects of Campbellite belief:

### *Law and Grace*

The Ten Commandments are not the Christian's moral code and are not binding on Christians; rather, Christian morality flows from union with Christ, which makes us dead to sin, and from the love to God and man which underlies all moral obligation. Sunday is thus not a (or the) Christian Sabbath, though it is sacred with an obligation upon Christians to worship.

### *Conversion and Baptism*

As mentioned above, in the synthesis of this cluster of beliefs lies the principal difference between the Churches of Christ on the one hand, and Protestants, Catholics and Eastern Orthodox on the other, particularly the connection Campbellites see between conversion, regeneration and baptism. They teach that there is – as the Nicene Creed says – “one baptism *for* the remission of sins.” Faith and repentance are necessary prerequisites for baptism, but all three are factors in the process of conversion. Faith is belief of the mind coupled with loyalty to, and trust in, Christ. Repentance is reformation of character and includes the emotions: it is a complete turning around. In baptism the gift of the Holy Spirit is received, sin is washed away, admission to the church of God is effected, the believer is buried with Christ, and the new birth ‘of water’ mentioned in John 3, that is, regeneration, takes place. Baptism is a mode in which the grace of God is active: it is not a bare symbol of a prior inward work.

This is seen as the teaching of the New Testament, of the early Church Fathers, and of the Catholic West and Orthodox East, but Campbellites insist that baptism cannot rightly be applied to infants as repentance and faith are required and cannot be effective by proxy.

### *Creeds and Confessions*

Creeds and confessions of faith are seen as divisive, but belief is important, and the New Testament is deemed to supply sufficient basis for Christian unity. The Churches of Christ have used the confession of Acts 8:37 (AV), "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God". Peter's confession of faith in Matthew 16:16 is used to mean the deity of Christ; the words are, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

### *Church*

Each local church is autonomous, and should have a plurality of elders and of deacons. The Churches oppose professionalism and a one-man ministry, asserting the right of all those who show the appropriate gifts to pray, read, or preach, even if not ordained as deacons or elders. No rigid distinction is maintained between clergy and laity. Deacons watch over temporal matters, elders are selected and ordained by the local congregation, and they rule, administer the sacraments, teach the faith, and exercise church discipline,

all of which should always be undertaken in a spirit of love. Elders may be paid full-time, part-time, or not at all.

### *The Lord's Supper*

The Lord's Supper should be observed each week, and should be preceded by self-examination and an upright life. In many churches it is restricted to baptised believers. The Churches of Christ repudiate the Zwinglian 'bare memorial' understanding of the Supper; rather, it unites members to each other, to Christ who is present, and to the church in heaven. It is the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and is an ordinance in which the grace of God is active.

### *Other Beliefs*

The Churches hold the Trinitarian view of God, though do not use the word *trinitarian* as it is not found in the New Testament. They believe in both the deity and the manhood of Christ. They believe that he died for our sins, but they promote no particular theory of the Atonement, that is to say, of 'how it works'.

### ***Bethel Chapel***

Bethel chapel was originally Calvinistic Methodist. It became vacant, and the Campbellites were able to rent it. Some while later they bought it.



*Bethel, 2022*

I am grateful to Rev. Philip Eveson, Wrexham, who has studied the deeds of Bethel, for information in the following three paragraphs.

He relates that, according to a publication concerning Capel Mawr for the period 1770 to 1970, there was a rift in the church at Capel Mawr in 1843.

The deeds of Bethel chapel, Campbell Street, relate that in June 1845 land was sold by the widow Mary Roberts to those who had seceded from Capel Mawr for the erection of a chapel.

In May 1851 the same land was sold to John Davies for the use of the “Baptist” (i.e. Campbellite Baptist) cause. A contract was drawn up between John Davies and the trustees of the chapel, and a mortgage for the purchase was raised from the Wrexham, Ruabon and North Wales Building Society.

#### *Further additions in the 1800s: Wesleyans and Baptists*

There was an English Wesleyan congregation in Aberderfyn, and by about 1830 a Welsh cause in Rhos. The Wesle Bach (Wesleyan Methodist Association) opened a chapel on The Square (y Sgwâr), though they soon joined the old Connexion.

In 1847 Alexander Campbell visited Wrexham, and two leading Wesleyans were won over to his views, including John Griffiths of Rhos. They persuaded others to adopt Campbell’s teaching.

John Griffiths (1811-56), a plasterer, became prominent in the cause in Campbell Street. He was an eloquent preacher and a fluent writer. He was with the “Wesle Bach” [Wesleyan Methodist Association] before he came to Rhos, and he and John Price of Wrexham (1810-1852) were leaders with the Wesle Bach in Rhos.

They were both baptised by Alexander Campbell. Griffiths wrote in a letter to John Davies of Mollington (an undated letter, but written before 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1855, which is the date on a second letter): “I am the person which brother Alexander Campbell baptised on Lord’s Day Morning in your

garden when he was there, after my brother J. Price was baptised on Friday.”

Although Griffiths died aged 45, he had a prominent share in the work of the church in Rhos and other places. [Footnote from Davies (1941): I am obliged to J. Rhosydd Williams for these facts.]

Members of Campbell Street also came from Penuel Baptist chapel, built in 1858 for the congregation previously meeting at Penrhos.

### *The Revival 1904-5*

From November 1904 to January 1905 in Rhos and area, 1425 converts were added to the churches in the revival which swept the area, including only four to Bethel. Watters says that the Campbellites in Britain, “though rejecting the Calvinistic theory of conversion, retained very largely the non-evangelical outlook of the Scotch Baptists, and later refers to the “non-evangelistic attitude of the Scotch Baptists.” This makes me suppose that his first reference also means “non-evangelistic” rather than non-evangelical, and it may go some way to explaining why such a meagre harvest was reaped in the 1904-5 revival. As noted earlier, although there were evangelists and church-planting, the emphasis was on reforming churches in an attempt to recapture primitive Christianity, rather than on the conversion of the unchurched masses.



### *Mid 1900s*

In 1924 John Rhosydd Williams was set aside as elder and regular preacher in both Welsh and English, and as evangelist to, and link with, the denomination's churches in North Wales and Cheshire: but more of this later.



### *1970s*

Two months after Robert Daniel Jones, minister at Bethel, died on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1972, on 24th April John Elwyn Thomas was appointed minister. Via his mother and grandmother, John is the greatgreatgreatgrandson of Daniel Williams senior (1809-77) of whom more in the next section. (Thus: Daniel-Robert-Daniel-Elizabeth-Edith-John Elwyn). He studied for the ministry with Overdale College part-time, while continuing his secular work, and has followed the custom of J R Jones of

Ramoth and of previous ministers at Bethel, of not using the title Rev (or Parch) despite being entitled to it should he choose. Despite being invited to become a minister more widely in the denomination, and thus of being open to be sent to any part of Britain, he declined the request and chose to remain in Rhos.

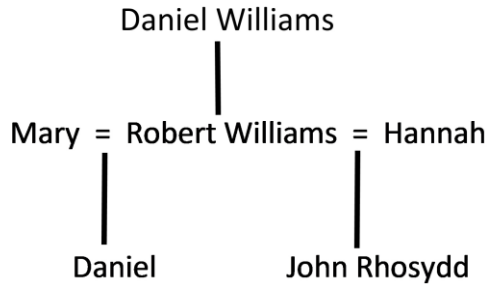
John Rhosydd Williams was uncle to John Elwyn's grandmother; Robert Daniel Jones was her cousin. Robert Williams (the church's first minister) was John Elwyn's greatgrandfather, father of his grandmother.

In 1972 the "United Reformed Church" was founded by the amalgamation of Presbyterian and Congregationalist congregations, and discussions followed among the Churches of Christ concerning whether to join the URC. In 1977 the church at Bethel voted not to join the United Reformed Church.

In 1979 the denominational association voted to dissolve itself on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1980, allowing each church liberty to decide its future. In 1981 forty Campbellite churches joined the URC; 24 formed a new "Fellowship of Churches of Christ"; and nine joined neither. Rhosllanerchrugog was one of the nine.

## TWO SONS OF BETHEL

### Daniel Williams jnr and John Rhosydd Williams



The relationships between these men is perhaps grasped more easily by means of this family tree. With the ministry of John Rhosydd a closer link was forged between Rhos and sister churches in North Wales and Cheshire.

#### *Daniel Williams snr*

Daniel Williams (1809-1877), was from Bala, where he grew up among farmers and was a farm servant when he was young. He moved to Llansantffraid, Glynceiriog, where he came into contact with the Scotch Baptists, and during the last part of his life he lived in Ponciau.

### *Robert Williams*

Robert Williams, Daniel's son, was born in Rhosllanerchrugog in 1834 or 1835.

According to an article cut from a newspaper or magazine, but sadly with the name and date of the publication missing, in a register from the Baptist chapel, Penycae, Robert's baptism at Mill Pool, Pentre, is recorded as having taken place when he was about 12 years old.

Robert became persuaded of the teachings of Alexander Campbell as adopted by a number of men from the Rhos area in the wake of Campbell's visit to Chester in 1847. They comprised the nucleus of the church which now meets at Bethel, and Daniel Williams cast in his lot among them, and was baptised, making one of the first additions to the newly formed church.

In 1871 he was living in Campbell Street, Rhos, with his wife Mary. He was 36, she was 32, and both were born in Rhos. Their children were Daniel aged 8 and John aged 6 (not John Rhosydd, who was born in 1885 by Robert's second wife).

In 1881, Robert, now a widower, was living in Johnson Street, Rhos, with his son Daniel, now 18, and daughter Mary, aged 8. He was working as a coalminer.

In 1882 he married his second wife, Hannah, who was twelve years younger than he was. She too was born in Rhos, and the ten-year censuses from 1891 to 1911 list them both as speaking only Welsh, not English.

In 1885 both Robert and Hannah were members at Bethel chapel, Campbell Street, Rhos. Their son John – also known as John Rhosydd Williams – was born on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1885.

In 1891 their children Margaret (aged 8) and John (aged 5) were living with them in Campbell Street. Robert, still a coal-miner, was elected as an elder at Bethel in 1893.

1901 finds them still in Campbell Street, with their children Margaret and John, aged 18 and 15, and Hannah's children, William, Ellis and Hannah. (William was born in Hanley, Staffordshire.) Robert was still working as a coalminer, and John Rhosydd is now a grocer's assistant. The whole family speak only Welsh.

By 1911, Robert has become an old-age pensioner. Margaret and John Rhosydd have learnt to speak English, though Robert and Hannah still speak only Welsh. John is now a grocer in his own right.

When Robert died on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1916 his passing marked the severing of one of the final links with the early founders of the movement in North Wales. His obituary in *The Bible Advocate* on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1916, supplies further information and comment:

He began working in the colliery when he was 7 years old and continued till he was 65, when a serious accident incapacitated him.

If he was preaching at the evening service at Bethel, he would nonetheless be at work by 10 p.m. the same evening. If he was preaching in Llanfair Caereinion, he would be back at work by 2 p.m. on the Monday,

despite having walked the eight miles from Welshpool, and made the 30-mile journey home the following morning. His circle of churches consisted of Rhos, Llanfair Caereinion, Porthmadog and Cricieth.

When warmed to his subject he exerted much bodily strength. His eyes would sparkle at a new thought (he was always an extempore speaker), and his actions were a revelation. He was most active in the pulpit. His discourses were full of scriptural quotations.

He was known for his kindness and generosity, a real father to all the younger members of the Church, and his strong commitment to Campbellite principles.

Robert had a son, Daniel (1863-1930), by his first wife Mary, named after his father. This Daniel was appointed as an elder at Campbell Street in December 1912. He was also a preacher in Welsh only, including as a visiting preacher at Llanfair Caereinion and Porthmadog.

#### *John Rhosydd Williams, son of Robert*

According to page 48 of the hand-written history of Bethel, in John Rhosydd's own hand-writing, in 1924 John was set apart as an evangelist for the Churches of Christ congregations in the District of North Wales and Cheshire, that is to say, Rhos, Chester, Saltney, Mollington, Saughall, Rossett, and Wrexham. In the first five years of his service he baptised twenty-seven people at Rhos, and a total of a hundred and nineteen people in all the churches with which he was linked.

However, according to the plaque inside the chapel, which honours his service, this ministry dated from 1926 till 1957.

In the 1891 census, John (aged 5) can only speak Welsh, as can his father Robert and stepmother Hannah, his two older brothers, and his two older sisters.

But by 1911, John is a grocer in his own right, and has learnt to speak English, though his parents and older sister speak only Welsh. They are living at Tawelfryn, Poplar Avenue, Rhos.

In the 1921 population census John Rhosydd, aged 36, is listed as a grocer at Bank Stores, High Street, Rhos, and is living with his wife Hannah, 4-year-old daughter Menna, daughter Gwendolen (aged 2) and son Hywel Glynn (aged 1).

On 29<sup>th</sup> September, 1939, the date of the register of the population for identity and ration cards in war-time, the family were living at Tawelfryn, Poplar Avenue, Rhos – the family being John's wife Hannah (born 5<sup>th</sup> May 1885), and their daughters Menna, and Gwendolen (by then Gwendolen Griffiths). John Rhosydd was away, possibly attending a religious conference or preaching, and was staying with Ralph and Mary Green, at 69 Victoria Terrace, Whitley Bay, Bedlington, Northumberland. Ralph's work was as a banksman in a colliery, described as 'heavy work', an occupation which may have supplied some easy affinity with John Rhosydd.

John Rhosydd Williams was also a local historian and bard. In 1957 still living at Tawelfryn, Poplar Avenue, Rhos he died on 5<sup>th</sup> August, leaving his effects to his widow Hannah.



John Rhosydd Williams  
1885–1957

*used with permission of Diane Hendricks, [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org)*

We see this that the church at Rhos grew out of a Welsh-language movement within Wales. But John Rhosydd's life and



ministry, and to a lesser extent that of evangelist John Nicholas (of whom more below), form a bridge, or link, to other nearby Churches of Christ, which arose separately and became linked or strengthened through their ministry with the church at Rhos.



*John Rhosydd Williams, Eisteddfod, Rhosllanerchrugog, 1951*

This photograph was in a frame; its origin and copyright are not known to the author

## **SOME NEARBY SISTER CHURCHES**

The North Wales and Cheshire Conference of Churches of Christ was formed in 1887, and from then on the churches in North Wales came into closer contact with churches in Cheshire.

Then, in 1908, England, Wales and Scotland were made into Divisions, and Rhos was assigned to the North Wales and Cheshire Division. We turn now to churches within that Division, and to some of their links with Rhosllanerchrugog.

### **Cam-yr-Alyn and Cox Lane**

The Church of Christ at Cam-yr-Alyn, Rossett (sometimes assigned to Burton) began in the house in the photograph below, in Cox Lane, Allington, then in Denbighshire. Five generations of men, all named Charles Davies, were the tenants, but the church began with the third Charles (ca 1760-1846), who attended an Independent chapel in Marford in early life. Family worship was a feature of the home in which he grew up.

Information about the cause in the Rossett area can be gleaned from two local newspapers (the *Liverpool Daily Post* of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1989, and *The Leader* of 10<sup>th</sup> May 1963); and some verses said to have been written by Charles Thomas in about 1870, writing as if he were Charles Davies; and the estate

agent's brochure who sold the farm-house by auction in June 1989. That literature was kindly supplied by Mary Ellwood of Marford, whose father was born in the house, and who, as a child, often visited two aunts who continued to live there. Further information has been drawn from Stephen (1909).

Charles Davies's future wife, Mary Hamersley, attended the same chapel as Charles, and her mother used to gather her sons and daughters and read the scriptures to them. For a while Mary moved to Mollington, near Chester, where the courtship with Charles began or continued. By 1791, the year of their first son's birth, they were living at the house in Cox Lane.



*the house in Cox Lane [courtesy of Denton Clark]*

According to the Liverpool *Daily Post* (21<sup>st</sup> June 1989, page 11) the house in the photograph was “the North Wales birthplace of the Church of Christ”. It is variously known as Cox Lane Farm and The Old House, Hoseley, Marford. In the late 1700s it was home to Charles and Mary Davies, who had a carpet-making, weaving, and tailoring business. At Cox Lane, they extended the practice of family worship to include their employees on Sunday afternoons, for Bible-reading, prayer, and worship. Neighbours began to be attracted and to enjoy the meetings.

Their employees attended family worship in the house on Sunday afternoons from 1793 onwards, and a church was formally established there in 1809.

Preachers appointed at the Pant chapel in Marford came and preached, when the preacher and his horse would be welcomed and provided for from towards the end of one week till the middle of the next, when they would set off for their next appointment.

The group had no local preacher of their own, but when no itinerant preacher came, they discussed the scriptures among themselves. In this way, largely beginning from Mark 16:16 in the Authorised Version of the Bible (“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”), they came to the conviction that, to correctly follow the Lord, they should be baptised by immersion, though there was initially some robust objection to this teaching. But the question arose, who should baptise them? It was decided

that Charles Davies should apply for baptism to the Baptist church in Wrexham, and after a six-month probation, he was baptised by the minister, who was surnamed Jenkins. This was some time before 1809.

Charles then probably baptised his wife and his son John (1794-1865), and within a short time after 1809 upward of thirty others at Cox Lane. They are believed to be the first Church of Christ in either England or Wales - hence the claim that this house was the birthplace of the Church of Christ.

Previous to 1809 they were an organised church practising infant baptism and observing the Lord's Supper. When the practice of baptism was adopted, unbaptised members were allowed to continue to partake of the Lord's Supper, but the decision was taken from then on to admit only baptised newcomers to membership and to Communion. But in fact every member of the original church was baptised within a year. Looking back, John Davies recorded in 1859:

Two only of their number had put on Christ in immersion. At that time, having searched carefully and so satisfied my own mind as to the will of my Lord, it was my privilege to be immersed in Him in the beautiful stream of the Alyn, making three of the number.

Alexander Campbell baptised their son Samuel in 1847. Campbell visited in 1847 while attending a conference in Chester, and baptised in the "spacious open-air" baptistry built by the hedge in a corner of the garden of the house,

where women were customarily baptised; men were baptised in the river, which by the shortest route on foot is about a mile away, following the same path from Cox Lane to the river as is there today, according to the 1872 Ordnance Survey map (published in 1878)<sup>4</sup>.

People came from far and wide, some walking, some on horseback, and the membership spread till they broke bread in three places, while remaining one church. It was not till 1835 that they knew there were other congregations in Britain and America with views like their own.

Preachers often arrived on horseback. The congregation met in the house most of the time, and sometimes in the front garden.

The meetings were held in the downstairs room to the right of the front door. They attracted thirty to forty people, and on occasions there were more people than the house could contain, and a chapel was opened in 1866 in Rossett in the area known as known as Cam yr Alyn.

Charles's son John was aged 16 in 1809, and soon began to take part in the preaching and teaching, "becoming the first preacher of primitive Christianity in this first Church of Christ" (Stephen: 1909:4), being joined later by his brother-in-law William Whalley and his brother Charles Davies. John Davies reached the age of majority (21) in 1815, and it is probable

---

<sup>4</sup> The map also shows the 1866 chapel.

that by then the itinerant preachers had ceased preaching at the meetings, as John Davies “fully entered upon preaching work that year.”

Looking back from 1859, as quoted in Stephen (1909), he recorded that:

I was even looked upon as ‘apt to teach’. On Lord’s Days I had, therefore, to take a pretty prominent part in teaching, exhortation, remembrance of the Lord, remembrance of his needy brethren, praises, prayers, and affectionate greetings, after the example of the earliest Christian Church. By degrees the little I could do was more frequently called for, and then like a child learning to walk, I first read my writing, next spoke from notes, afterwards from pre-arrangements only, and occasionally without that. This continued some ten or twenty years, during which time that little company enjoyed much peace and concord, and received valuable additions.

When John moved to Mollington, where he worked as a land agent and surveyor, he arranged to visit Cox Lane monthly, and others within the congregation took other services. John also was instrumental in planting two other churches – “vineyards of God” as he calls them, “so that my hands continued to be pretty full, the three little flocks being several miles apart.” Sadly he does not tell us where those two other congregations were, but it seems likely that they were at Mollington and Saughall, or maybe Chester.

After John Davies moved to Mollington, in 1821, others began to take a leading part at Cox Lane, including Charles Davies – that is, the fourth Charles Davies, son of the third Charles Davies. In 1845 Peter Stephen, father of the Peter Stephen who composed the manuscript history of the church, moved to Mollington, and also preached once a month at Cox Lane. The third Charles died in 1846.

At about the same time, Charles Davies (the fourth) left Cox Lane to the charge of his father-in-law Edward Evans and for the next twenty-seven years lived at Mollington, Sutton, and Gresford, returning to Cox Lane in 1871.

In March 1866 the church moved to its new chapel at Cam-yr-Alyn, built by John Davies' widow (by courtesy of *The Leader*, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1963).



The new chapel, built in 1866.



The house was eventually sold, in 1989, by estate agents Denton Clark, Chester.

### ***Wrexham***

There was a “New Testament Church” in Wrexham, which had never been connected with the Scotch Baptists or any other Baptists. Reporting to the “Christian Messenger” their leader wrote:- “At that time we knew nothing of Alexander Campbell or his writings ... Neither his writings nor those of any other uninspired man have, of themselves, made any change in our faith or practices.”



*Talbot Road, Wrexham*

Dr Witton Davies said that the Wrexham church was founded in 1858, and that another church founded in 1839 had quickly disappeared; but this may be a confusion with the fact that the Wrexham church acquired the old Primitive Methodist chapel in Talbot Road, when the Primitive Methodists moved in 1859 to Poyser Street.

### ***Mollington and Saughall***

What is now Mollington originally included two separate places: Great Mollington, known as Mollington Tarrant (in the parish of Backford), and Little Mollington, previously called Mollington Banastre, (in the parish of St. Mary on the Hill). They were combined into Mollington civil parish in 1901.

Peter Stephen compiled a brief history of the congregations at Mollington and Saughall in 1921, but it is not easy, from that and other surviving archives, to unravel the stories of the two congregations, and little attempt is made here.

### ***Mollington***

In 1817, in Gresford parish church, John Davies married Mary Peers, whose parents were living at Tarrant Farm, Mollington. They moved to Tarrant in 1821, and lived at The Willows for many years, but by 1861 the census lists them as resident at Rose Farm.

It is said that the church at Mollington existed before John Davies moved to Mollington in 1821; it has also been said that John Davies began the church there when he and his wife Mary moved to The Tarrant. Be that as it may, the life of the church certainly centres on his work.

The church began in 1821 with eight worshippers, namely, Charles and Mary Peers, John and Mary Davies, Charles's sister, Margaret Golbourn, John Bennion and his wife. There was an open-air baptistry in the garden at Tarrant. Others were added to the church thereafter.

From 1821 to 1842 the worshippers of both Mollington and Saughall met at Tarrant, but then eleven worshippers asked John Davies to begin a fortnightly afternoon service for worship and the Breaking of Bread. It was noted that the new meeting was not set up "in a factious spirit".

In October 1835 "our venerable Brother Bennion" had borrowed from a Scotch Baptist friend in Chester the first three issues of William Jones's *Millennial Harbinger*, and taken them to Mollington. Stephen (1909:7) writes:

I shall never forget the scene when he and our friends took their seats around my little table. What delight beamed in each countenance, to hear, for the first time, that we were not 'alone' in the world as we had till then thought, but that, spread over the United States, there were 150,000 brethren and sisters, in churches numbering from 50 to 500 members in each. The first

thing, of course, was to spread the news among the brethren here, the next to write to Mr Campbell (18<sup>th</sup> October, 1835) to express our gladness and desire to become acquainted, to establish an intercourse and to obtain his numerous publications.

He continues:

Still, we regarded ourselves quite 'alone' in England, and for about two years more concluded there were none other here like-minded. Then, however, we were a second time made joyful by some numbers of Mr Wallis' *Christian Messenger* finding their way to Mollington, by which we were soon introduced to sister churches in our own beloved country.

In 1844 John Davies's brother Charles moved to Mollington.

In 1845 Peter Stephen, father of the Peter Stephen who composed the 1921 manuscript history of the church, moved to Mollington, and also preached once a month at Cox Lane. He had been an elder of the church in Dundee.

In 1847 Alexander Campbell was a guest of John Davies, and when Campbell spoke at Shrewsbury, visitors attended from Wrexham, Rhosllanerchrugog and Criccieth.

In 1860 Grove Chapel Saughall and Mollington were holding services on alternate Sundays. Peter Stephen, to whom communications were to be addressed, was living at Kingswood Cottage, Mollington.

After Davies's death in 1865, as Stephen wrote, John Davies so presented and established his beliefs in his home and neighbourhood "as to leave no room for any to say or feel that harshness characterised either himself or his message." He had been "a brother-beloved, even a father in Christ to them [i.e. the people at Rossett], and to the majority of members in the four Churches of Cox Lane, Mollington, Chester and Saughall."

In 1871 John Davies, son of Charles and Mary Davies of Cox Lane, Allington, (living in Great Sutton in 1851 and in Mollington as a boarder and already working as a land surveyor in 1861) moved to The Crosslooms, and meetings were held in the house.

In 1875 the first chapel was built (of brick, with a slated roof) adjoining the offices at The Crosslooms, and opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> August – though the date on the wall says it was *erected* on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1875. Samuel Davies and Peter Stephen were leaders in arranging for the building of the Crosslooms chapel. At the 1892 Annual Meeting the leaders of the Mollington church were Samuel Davies and G. Gilham.

In 1895 Davies bought an iron chapel, which provided more comfortable seating than the earlier brick chapel. Davies died in 1898, but the chapel continued in use at least until 1921 when the account was written by Peter Stephen.

A reminiscence in Poulton's *Beneath the Surface*, from one Dorothy Carline, records that:

Before the 1920s ... we joined the little Church of Christ Sunday School ... held in a wooden hut with a tin roof ... A Mr Stevens had it built in a corner of his garden at 'Crosslooms' on Townfield Lane. For years it was without a harmonium ... Eventually a harmonium was purchased.



*the brick chapel at Crosslooms*

It is believed that the house in the photograph, with the bricked up windows, was the chapel in Mollington. In the 1921 census "summary books" there is this schedule:

67 Crosslooms villa private house Edward Davies

68 Crosslooms villa Gilbert --- (illegible)

Nonconformist Church of Christ chapel

Crosslooms estate office Peter Stephen

69 Crosslooms villa private house Peter Stephen

The 1921 census includes:

Crosslooms Farm, Samuel Davies 57 land and auction agent, born Allington

Crosslooms Peter Stephen 45 land agent and surveyor born Saughall

It is clear from this entry that that link between the Davies and Stephen families remained firm.

### ***Saughall***

The register of burials for Grove Chapel record John Rhosydd Williams burying people in their cemetery in 1927-1948. In 1927 he began performing baptisms at Saughall and continued to do so till 1943. Here again is a link between Rhos and elsewhere in the Division.

But as we turn to the earlier days of the cause, we find that Gospel services were first held in the home of two unmarried sisters, Mary and Ann Furnival, and continued for seven years. In 1845 Peter Stephen moved to Mollington to assist John Davies in his business, and visited the congregations at Mollington, Wrexham, Chester, and Cox Lane, but his main ministry was at Saughall, and he may justifiably be seen as the father of the Saughall church.

Grove Chapel was built in 1849 (and enlarged in 1865). In 1854 Peter Stephen was elected as one of the four who held oversight, and he held that position for forty years.

In the years from 1846 to 1893, two hundred and thirty-two people were baptised and became members – though it is not clear whether some joined Mollington and some Saughall.

In 1897, according to the church's minutes, Peter Stephen, was a member at Grove Chapel, and he chaired the church meetings until 1929. In fact there was a large Stephen family there around the turn of the century: Peter, Anne, Emily, Catherine, William, Sarah, Mary, James.

The church used unfermented wine for Communion for the first time in January 1901.

A successful mission was held in Saughall by Bartling Ellis in 1912.

Efforts were repeatedly made to ensure the church should grow in numbers, and from 29<sup>th</sup> January to 17<sup>th</sup> February 1918 John Nicholas<sup>5</sup> of Rhos conducted special services at Grove Chapel. Nicholas worked for a while as evangelist serving the two churches at Rhos and Llanfair Caereinion. He moved to Rhos, and was received into membership in 1915, but he and his wife moved to Llanfair Caereinion in 1921, following the severe sorrow of the loss of their daughter Lily, aged 21, in the

---

<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere the Minutes write Nichols, but John Rhosydd Williams has Nicholas



last quarter of 1920. Nonetheless, his ministry forged another link with Rhosllanerchrugog within the Division.

In the 1921 electoral register Peter Stephen is living at Crosslooms, Mollington, together with his wife Emily, and children Stephen, Samuel, and Lindley.

On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1923 the Saughall church minutes record that that, "It was mentioned with deep regret that Brother D. R. Hill's 4 week Mission in Nov. last [i.e. 1922], like that of Bro. J. John Nichols of 1918, had brought no additions to the Church. It was felt that a longer time was necessary."

The minute book of the Church of Christ at Grove Chapel, Saughall, records on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1924 (with a somewhat muddled sentence) that:

D. R. Hill Evangelist completes his 3<sup>rd</sup> year in this Division Next Aug. ...

At Chester Div. Com<sup>ee</sup> promised was made by the churches to try to maintain the present Local Contributions to G.E.C. but could not increase the amount. It was partly on the strength of this Bro. J. R. Williams is being put (pro. tem.) on Staff of Evangelists. As much of his time is expected to be given to Wales, *what are English churches to do?*

Resolved that "This church consider that Bro. Hill's engagement shd cease at end of 3<sup>rd</sup> year; suggested we, in future, try for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Evangelist for six months, in addition to Bro. J. Williams."

In 1932, although “it was still hoped to get a capable Evangelist,” J. E. Stephen suggested an intensive mission by local talent.

John Rhosydd Williams, as district evangelist, is briefly mentioned in 1948: “we have had many visits from him, and ...” The next page is lacking!

When Grove Chapel closed in 1981, some of the members moved to the United Reformed Church at Blacon, and some worshipped at the parish church in Saughall. The chapel has been demolished and I have not been able to discover an image. Its graveyard is still there.

### ***Chester***

A range of entries in the minute books link Bethel, Rhos, with Chester, via John Rhosydd Williams.

Firstly, J. Rhosydd Williams was one of the trustees for the land in 1930. The board meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1940 decided to invite him “for” (presumably as speaker at) the public meeting to be held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March – perhaps in connection with the church or chapel anniversary.

The board meeting of April 1942 decided to send a letter “to Mr Wilson” agreeing to take “full days collection on condition that Mr J R Williams expenses are paid by the local committee.” Then again, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1943 “It was decided

upon to write for the services of Bro J R Williams to Mr R Brown, offering £2-10-0 per week for services, to be paid to H.M.C. [presumably Home Missions Committee].”

The June 1943 board meeting of the church “agreed that as many as could get would attend the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> inst of the North Wales Evangelistic Committee to secure the services of Bro J. R. Williams Evangelist offering £2-10-0 per week for three or six months if possible.” Two weeks later, at a ‘called meeting’, “we are making application to HMC direct for six months service of Bro J R Williams offering them £78 (or £3 per week) clear.”

At the church’s board meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1943 John Rhosydd Williams was present; on 22<sup>nd</sup> November he opened a social meeting with prayer; in January 1944 he opened a board meeting with prayer, and did the same in March. At the March meeting he gave a detailed survey of his work in Chester, including visits to various members which, “unfortunately” had not resulted in more regular attendance at the meetings by several members. It seems that he was ministering to a church whose spiritual temperature was not all it might have been.

At the church meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1944 it was noted that Williams had served the church for six months, and there was discussion concerning making an application to HMC for the services of a regular evangelist offering £3-10-0 for twelve

months; but it was reported at the June board meeting that no evangelist was available for the next twelve months.

The following year (1945) it was reported at the church's February board meeting that a letter had been received from HMC asking the church to have J. R. Williams for six months. This however was not accepted, for whatever reason (finance? dissatisfaction with his success? desire for a change?) but it was decided to offer to take him for the months of May and June at a price of £3 per week. Then in March the board agreed to pay £3.10.0 a week for him to serve them for those two months. Hence his presence at the board's May meeting.

A year later (May, 1946) at the church meeting, the secretary reported "steady progress and a better average attendance at the meetings. At the commencement of the year we had the services of both Brothers J R Williams and F J Carr" and "several were still coming as a result of their visit." The year had also seen six baptisms.

Finally the church meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1951 noted the "retirement of District Evangelist Bro J. Rhosydd Williams". A testimonial cheque of £10, together with other local Church testimonials, had been presented. They awaited news of the prospects for filling the vacancy his retirement created.

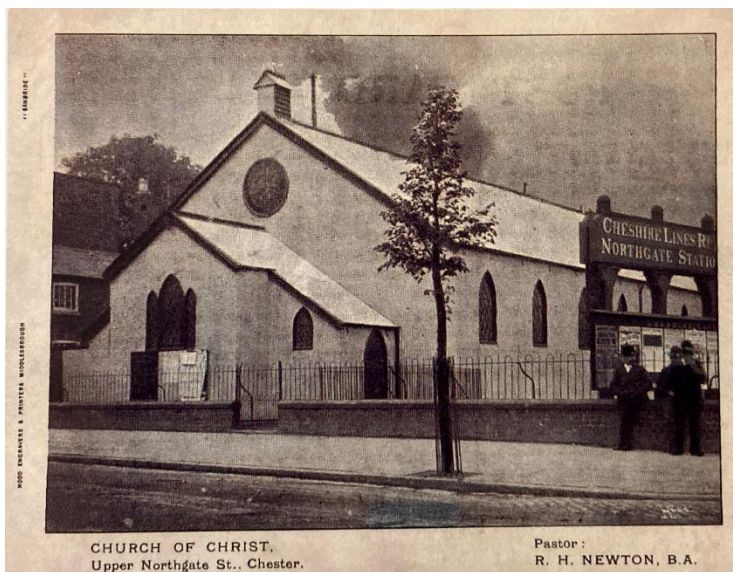
What else can we learn about the Chester church where the brother from Rhosllanerchrugog served in these ways? The website [british-history.ac.uk](http://british-history.ac.uk) has a section entitled *Churches of Christ, Chester* in which we read that "Chester had an

important part in the early history of the Churches of Christ” and adds that the movement was “shunning the emotional revivalism characteristic of many 19<sup>th</sup>-century evangelicals.” Their Upper Northgate Street church closed in 1981 after the denomination was dissolved; Chester joined the recently formed United Reformed Church.

But to return to the church’s minute books, we find that the first pastor listed is M. D. Dodd, who served from 1878 to 1880.

Two chapels were built, both in Upper Northgate Street – the first not intended as a permanent building - but not all was well towards the end of the period of the first chapel, for at the board meeting in January 1936 “Bro Price promised to obtain a supply of rat poison.” And in March 1936 “Bro Lane proposed and Bro Knowles seconded that a circular letter be sent to all Church members asking them to attend services.”

It seems to have been a time of mixed encouragements and setbacks, for at the church meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> June the previous year, 1935, the Secretary reported that the church had received forty new members during the past twelvemonth. Nonetheless, sixteen voted for, and three against, discontinuing the mid-week Gospel service and holding a Bible class on a Thursday.



*first Chester chapel: courtesy of Cheshire Record Office (EXX16/8456/9)*

It was also decided to send a letter to all members asking for gifts towards the new chapel that was opened in 1937, for which “The loyal band of members in the Church here have been sacrificing and working for many years to build.” By then the first chapel had been found to be unsafe; members had paid for the land; and a letter was to be sent to other churches in the denomination asking for financial assistance in completing the project.

Closing services at the first chapel were planned for Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1936.

Efforts were also made to increase the membership, and on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1938 a 'called meeting' decided "to hold a mission commencing Feb 13<sup>th</sup> to be continued Feb 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, concluding 27<sup>th</sup>. 2000 handbills to be obtained & volunteers to be asked to distribute." In addition, a prayer meeting was to be held from 7:30 till 8:00 p.m. with a Gospel service to begin at 8:00 p.m..

However, in 1940 poor attendance was reported at the board meeting, and at their meeting the following month it was recorded that members were staying away from the Thursday night meeting "because it was not run on the old lines." Other complaints were that visits were not frequent enough, there was too short an address at the Lord's Table, and there was too much organ playing.

The following month a 'called meeting' agreed that "the services of Bro Morgan be dispensed with owing to the serious financial situation of the church." Bro. Morgan was the minister. Clearly it was not an entirely happy church. Morgan in fact reigned from the pastorate, giving notice on 30<sup>th</sup> April that his ministry would end on 31<sup>st</sup> August.

In January 1948, a board meeting agreed to hold "Evangelical meetings ... to encourage loyalty to Christ in this Church" from 4<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April.



*second Chester chapel: courtesy of Cheshire Record Office (EXX16/8456/9)*

## ***Saltney***

The website [british-history.ac.uk](http://british-history.ac.uk), in its section entitled *Churches of Christ, Chester*, states that “a second church was opened in Saltney in 1886 in the former Presbyterian Church of Wales mission chapel in Curzon Street” (which has subsequently been demolished). In 1961 the congregation moved to the former Methodist chapel in Hough Green. After the denomination was dissolved the church joined the recently established Fellowship of Churches of Christ, but the above website states that it “continued in 1995 as an independent evangelical church”.





*Saltney (Hough Green)*

*Let us, therefore, loving Him, love one another, and in that love continue to preach the “gospel to every creature”, letting our light so shine before men that they may through us glorify our Father which is in heaven.*

- Peter Stephen (1909)

### ***Works consulted***

Anon (2022) *John Elwyn Thomas yn cwblhau 50 mlynedd o wasanaeth yn Eglwys Disgyblion Crist, Bethel* (Nene, June 2022)

british-history.ac.uk (website)

Davies, J D\* (1941) *Y Bedyddwyr Albanaidd a'r Bedyddwyr Campbellaidd yng Nghymru* (Blaenau Ffestiniog)

Foster, D. A. (2020) *A Life of Alexander Campbell* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans)

Poulton, A. (2017) in *Beneath the Surface: historical essays from the Cheshire townships of: Lea-by-Backford, Backford, Coughall, Chorlton, Mollington* (Bury St Edmunds: Arrima)

Robinson, W (1946) *What the Churches of Christ stand for* (Birmingham: Berean Press)

Rushford, Dr Jerry Curator, Churches of Christ Heritage Center, Pepperdine University, Malibu California – email correspondence

Stephen, P (1909) *The first Century of the Church of Christ, Cam-yr-Alyn* (unpublished manuscript)

*The Bible Advocate* 21<sup>st</sup> July 1916, page 451

Underwood, A C (1947) *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Baptist Union)

Watters, A. C. (1940) *History of the British Churches of Christ* (Ph D Thesis, University of Edinburgh)

Whitley, W T (1923) *A History of British Baptists* (London: Charles Griffin & Co)

Williams, J Rhosydd *Rhosllanerchrugog* (The Christian Advocate 18.6.1948)

Williams, J Rhosydd *Eglwys Crist, Bethel, Rhos 1840-1940* (handwritten, undated)

Williams, J Rhosydd *Hanes Rhosllannerchrugog* (Rhosllanenerchrugog: Pwyllgor Lleol Eisteddfod Genedlaethol, 1945)

*The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004)

\* John Daniel Davies (1874-1948). According to the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, Davies was born on 12th January 1874, at Gwynfryn, Aberderfyn, Ponciau. He settled in Blaenau Ffestiniog, was a preacher with the Scottish or Sandemanian Baptists, and had an unbounded admiration for J.R. Jones, Ramoth. His account of the Scottish and Campbellite Baptists in Wales appeared in the transactions of Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru, 1940-1.

### **Church website**

[www.bethelrhos.com](http://www.bethelrhos.com)

### **Author's website**

[www.primitivemethodism.com](http://www.primitivemethodism.com)

### **YouTube videos**

On YouTube channel 'David Young Wrexham' are videos germane to Bethel, Rhosllanerchrugog. They include those entitled as below; others may be added after the printing of this book:

- *Evangelist John Rhosydd Williams*
- *A short Sermon*
- *The Road goes ever on and on*
- *A meal at the End: 3-minute clip from a sermon*

