

The Story of St David's Methodist Church, Craig y don *As published in the 90th anniversary pamphlet 2014*

Our story of the beginnings of St David's Methodist Church, Craig y don, goes back to 1859 when the first English speaking Wesleyan Society was formed in Llandudno. Those early English speaking Wesleyan pioneers built a temporary Chapel on the corner of Lloyd Street and Chapel Street, where the former Ebenezer Welsh (Wesleyan) Methodist Chapel now stands. No sooner had the Chapel been opened when these early Wesleyans had a vision to build a Church large enough to serve the rapidly growing town of Llandudno and its increasing number of holidaymakers. By 1866 St. John's Wesleyan Chapel was built on Mostyn Street. The membership was 33, yet they had the confidence to build a Chapel to hold over 600 people. During the following 30 years St. John's grew in members, congregations and size. Two new vestries, the schoolroom and the caretaker's house were all added during these years.

In the Llandudno Wesleyan Circuit minutes for 1894 there is a request from the Local Preachers Meeting asking the Circuit to look into the need and opportunity for a second place of worship in the Circuit. The Circuit Meeting responded by commissioning the Superintendent Minister, Rev. W. Briscoombe and Mr J. Slater, the Circuit Steward, to find suitable rooms to rent in Deganwy. Although these two men searched the whole area for suitable premises for Sunday Worship and a Sunday School, none could be found.

God then led them in a way they had not expected. Their attention was drawn to the opportunity to be found in Craig y don. On the Ordinance Survey map of Llandudno for 1889 Craig y don is mainly agricultural land. The only property is a row of eight houses and a hotel on East Parade, a row of 18 houses on Craig y don Parade, one house in Victoria Street, six houses in Ocean View Terrace (now the Washington end of Clarence Road) and five cottages in Tyn y Ffrith. There was no Mostyn Avenue. In the whole of Queen's Road there were just eight houses. The only building in Nant y Gamar Road was the present Bethania Welsh (Calvinistic Methodist) Presbyterian Chapel. On Nant y Gamar itself there were a few farms and cottages.

By 1897 Craig y don was growing. Between 1889 and 1897 the Welsh Baptists had built a Chapel in Queen's Road, but after a short life as a Baptist Church it was offered for sale. At a trustees meeting of St. John's on May 20th, 1897, the Rev. Owen Watkins read a letter which he had received from Rev. J. Spinther James, offering to lease the Welsh Baptist Chapel in Queen's Road, Craig y don for use as a Wesleyan Chapel. The yearly rent was to be £30 in the first year, rising to £40 in the third year. There was also the option to buy the Chapel at any time during the three years for £1600.

In the Llandudno Advertiser dated 17th June, 1897, the following advert appears. 'Queen's Road English Wesleyan Chapel, Craig y don. The Opening Services will be held next Sunday, June 20th, 1897, at 11am and 6.30pm. Preacher Rev. Owen Watkins. All readers are respectfully invited to attend these opening services. Owen Watkins, St John's House, Llandudno.' The report in the following week's issue of the paper tells us that the opening services were attended by 'large congregations.' This Chapel, where our Craig y don witness started, is now the Independent Evangelical Church in Queen's Road.



This new Wesleyan Church started with four members. The Class Leader was Mr Arthur E. Pearson and later Mr Joseph E. Reeves. Miss Coates was the Junior Class Leader with 20 young people under her care. Within a few months the membership was ten but during the short life of this Church the membership never grew to more than 14. Even so the average Sunday collection was £2 14 7d. Apart from Sunday Services the first thing the new Society did was to start a Sunday School. They had five teachers and 35 scholars. The average attendance was 25 children. Although the Sunday School only started in June, by December they were able to report that the children had collected £1 8 4d for the Juvenile Missionary Association (JMA.) One year later the Church has started a library with 84 volumes and 25 readers.

From the earliest days of the Society the regular weekly activities of the Church were very impressive. On Sundays they held Services at 11am and 6.30pm, and a Sunday School at 2.30pm. On Mondays the Band of Hope met at 7pm. On one Tuesday in the Month there was a Missionary Meeting at 7.30pm and every other Tuesday there was a Prayer Meeting with an Address. On Wednesdays Miss Coates held her Junior Class Meeting at 7.15pm and on Thursdays at 7.30pm the Adult Class Meeting was held. The officers of this well established and enthusiastic Church were Senior Society Steward and Sunday School Superintendent Mr A. E. Pearson (who was also a Circuit Steward,) Mr Charles G. James was the other Society Steward, and the Poor Steward was Mr George Hughes.

In February 1899 the Rev. J. Spinther James wrote to the St. John's Trustees requesting a deposit of £200 towards the purchase of the Queen's Road Chapel. The trustees replied by asking for an extension of the lease for an extra 12 months. This was not granted. Mr A. E. Pearson and Mr G. Hughes pressed the trustees to make yet another approach but after a long discussion in the meeting it was decided not to make another application for an extension of the lease. On October 1st, 1900, the furniture and effects were removed and the keys were handed back to the owners. This, however, was not the end of the Methodist Witness in Craig y don. Whilst for the next four and a half years Wesleyan Methodist Witness for the whole of Llandudno was centred on St. John's, Wesleyan Methodist Worship and Fellowship continued in Craig y don in house meetings.

At the turn of the century Craig y don grew quickly. All this housing development strengthened the determination of the Wesleyan Methodist people of Llandudno to have a preaching place again in Craig y don.

The first mention of the Allday family is to be found in the public census of 1881 (they came from Birmingham.) In 1886 the St. John's records show that the Misses Allday give a donation to the Home Missions fund. A few years later the minutes of St. John's record that Miss Alice Allday urged the Church to hold a mission. In 1904 this remarkable woman asked Mr David Savory (who had moved with his family into the area in the late 1890s) if she can

lease a piece of land he owns in Queen's Road. The indenture made clear that the land was required 'for the purpose of erecting thereon a Mission Church or place of Divine Worship.' Miss Allday from her own private money agreed to take the lease of the plot of land having a frontage of 40 feet to Queen's Road and a depth of 80 feet along Victoria Street. The lease was for 10 years from June 24th, 1904, with an option to extend the lease by a further five years. The cost of the lease was a rent of £18 4 0d per year. So keen was she to start the new Church that even before the document was signed Miss Allday sought quotations for drainage of the land. Mr and Mrs David Savory were also very eager for the project to go ahead. In April 1904 Miss Allday asked Edward Thorp & Sons of Llandudno to give a specification and estimate for the foundations of a Mission Hall. In May of the same year she paid an account for this work to be done at the cost of £43 15 0d.

Mr and Mrs Savory were so caught up with the vision of a new Mission Church for Craig y don that they give to Miss Allday on May 21st, 1904, a donation to cover the cost of laying out the site ready for the builder. Mr and Mrs Savory also pay direct to E. Thorp and Sons a further £10 8 6d for extra work to be done on the foundations.

All was not to go well at first with the building of the Mission. In August Miss Allday seems to have been robbed by a builder to whom she had paid money, but for which little if any work had been done. Her solicitor in a letter to her 'hopes that the police have been informed.' Miss Allday then asked Ginger, Lee & Co. of Longsight, Manchester to tender for the work. They got the contract and built the 'Iron Church' in October. Miss Allday paid £154 15 0d for the Mission Church again out of her own purse. During the winter Miss Allday who was still a member of St. John's, offered the Mission Church to the Wesleyan Methodists. In a letter dated March 8th, 1905, to the Rev. Theo'r Bishop, the Superintendent Minister of the Llandudno Circuit, Miss Allday wrote 'I do this day give up possession and hand over to you the little Church at Craig y don to be joined to the Wesleyan Church. I give all as a free gift.' In the same letter she wrote 'I wish dear Mr Savory to be made the Steward and Class Leader.' Her wishes were respected.



'TIN TABERNACLE' WESLEYAN MISSION CHURCH,
QUEEN'S ROAD

Although the 'Tin Tabernacle' was given to the Wesleyan Church, the land still belonged to Mr David Savory. On June 16th, 1905, Miss Allday surrenders the lease and the land is returned to Mr Savory. The Minister and Trustees of St. John's agreed to buy the freehold of the land from Mr Savory at a cost of £324. But where was the money to come from? It came from Mr Savory himself, who lent the new Craig y don Wesleyan Mission Chapel £324. The Trustees agreed to pay off the money in small amounts at such times as it was convenient. The Trustees also offered to pay Mr Savory 4½% per annum interest on the capital outstanding.

The first Sunday Service held in the Chapel after it had become the Craig y don Wesleyan Mission Chapel was on April 2nd, 1905, at 6.30pm. The preacher was Mr J. Mudd of Y Graig, Llandudno. The new Chapel started with a membership of nine under the leadership of David Savory. The Secretary was Mr Arthur J. Davis, the Society Steward, Chapel

Steward and Treasurer was also Mr David Savory. Once the summer was over the Sunday School was established. It held its inaugural meeting on October 22nd, 1905, when twelve children and twelve adults attended. Mr Frederick Holland was appointed Superintendent, Mr John D. Knight was the Secretary and Mr David Savory was the treasurer. There were three classes formed with Mrs F. Holland, Mrs J. W. Whitmore, Mrs Taylor, Mr Martindale and Mr D. Savory as teachers. One of the earliest developments of the Sunday School was the starting of a branch of the I.B.R.A. (International Bible Readers Association) with Mr Martindale as the secretary. A branch of JMA was also formed. In 1906 the children collected £7 3 0d for JMA which was in those days a very commendable amount for a new Sunday School.

Having got the Mission Chapel well organised and established, the new Society did not relax. Only seven months after the opening service the Trustees were making enquiries to see if the adjoining land to the Chapel was for sale. They also committed themselves to giving a grant to the Sunday School and to the giving of one full day's Sunday collection to Foreign Missions and one full Sunday's collection to Home Missions. The enthusiasm of the people of the Mission Chapel spurred them on to make improvements. In 1907 they were improving the heating system. In 1908 they added new vestries and lavatories. In 1910 a harmonium was bought.

In 1910 the £300 owing to Mr Savory was repaid by taking out a loan from Mr J. H. Jones. Although there was a debt on the Chapel, the extension of the building and the improvement of the equipment for worship and the Sunday School all go to show that the Church was not only in good heart, but was growing. Throughout this period the St. John's Ladies Sewing Class, whose Secretary for part of the time was Miss Savory, gave £80 each year to the Mission Chapel.

In 1912 the Trustees of the Mission Chapel set up a sub-committee to investigate the possibilities of buying land for a new chapel. After two weeks they reported that Mrs Dunphy was willing to sell land on the corner of Queen's Road and Mostyn Avenue for £1200. In February 1912 they offered Mrs Dunphy £1000. This offer was not accepted, but Mrs Dunphy offered a donation of £100 to the building fund of the new church.

With the war now approaching the scheme for buying land was laid aside.

However the Church did not lose heart. In 1914 Mr Holland and some friends raised money to buy a much needed piano and in 1915 100 new Methodist Hymn Books are ordered. Throughout the difficult time of the war the Society continued to thrive. Mr David Savory quite clearly gave a great deal of his time and enthusiasm to the Chapel. It was nick-named by some people Savory's Chapel. The minutes regularly recorded letters of affection and appreciation being sent to Mr Savory. Unfortunately David Savory was not to live long enough to see his dream of a new Chapel come into being. He died in his home at Shepperton on 19th December 1919, aged 76, and was buried in the Great Orme Cemetery. On the grave stone the following apt inscription is to be found. "After he had served his own generation by the will of God fell on sleep."

Once the war was over and things start getting back to normal the search for land started again. In 1919 the land beside the Chapel came on the market 'but it was not considered advisable at this time' to buy it. In 1920 electric light was installed at a cost of £15 15 0d. A new impetus was given to the Trustees to look for a site for a new Church when in February the Rev. George F. Rose reported that the Trustees of St. John's Church had granted '£2000 for the further progress at Craig y don.' It was decided to put the money on deposit at the best terms possible in the name of the Craig y don extension fund. With this money in the bank and a renewed enthusiasm for the new Church the Trust was remade and land was sought. The new Trustees considered land on the corner of Carmen Sylva Road and Mostyn

Avenue; also Dunphy's plot. Jamesson's land on Mostyn Avenue was rejected because of its 'scrappy nature.' There was also a plot in Rosebery Avenue considered. At a meeting in April 1923 it was agreed to buy Mrs Dunphy's plot. The asking price was £1575. Messrs T. Smith, A. H. Mallalieu and G. Kempsey were appointed to see 'Mrs Dunphy and her solicitor son with the Trustees Authority to complete the purchase of Dunphy's plot on the best terms obtainable.' The land was eventually bought for £1550 in May 1923.

Once the land was bought the Trustees didn't waste any time. In May 1923 Mr Hornabrook, a representative of A. Brocklehurst and Co., Architects and Surveyors, of Palatine Bank Buildings, Norfolk Street, Manchester met the Trust Officers and the Minister on the site of the new Church. Later the same day Mr Hornabrook met the Trustees. Various schemes were discussed. One of the schemes was to build a School/Chapel. This was rejected and it was decided to have a Church to seat around 350. The meeting then appointed A. Brocklehurst & Co. to be the Architects and instructed Mr Hornabrook to prepare Plans. In July Mr Hornabrook met the Trustees with drawings for two schemes.

Scheme A had two variants. The main body of the Church had transepts. The seating, including the transepts, would be for 365 people. A Sunday School would seat 230 children. Variant One was to be a Chancel with choir pews plus an organ chamber, minister's vestry and kitchen. Variant Two would not have a Chancel but instead a Rostrum with a pulpit with the choir and organ behind.

Scheme B had both variants but would have a smaller Sunday School to seat 210 children. The quotation for scheme B with a chancel was £8065 and scheme B without transepts was £6877.

Scheme B without transepts but with a chancel was approved. Later this scheme was further modified because of costs and the proposed Sunday School was not built.

The contract was eventually given to John Mayers, Sons & Co. Ltd. of Chester. The stone work was done by Messrs H. Clegg & Sons also of Chester.

On Wednesday, 23rd January, 1924, the foundation stones of the new Chapel were laid at a service conducted by the Minister, the Rev. James Goudie, at 3pm. The first stones were appropriately laid by Mrs David Savory and Miss Alice Allday. The other stonelayers were Mrs A. Greaves, Lady Letts, Mrs Thomas Smith, Mrs Thomas Horrocks, Mrs T. H. Port, Mrs George Owen, Mrs Enoch Davies, Miss Sarah Ann Holman, Mrs G. H. Hampton, Miss Dorothy Kempsey, Mr Arthur Edward Pearson, Mr Frederick Holland, Mr Ernest Spencer, Mr T. Gregory, Mr Martin Luther Mudd, Mr William Holroyd Bamblin, Mr Harold Pearson and Mr Gordon Percival Owen. In the publicity hand-out it stated that the Church was to be called St. David's and that the cost was to be £7060. In December 1949 George J. Savory gave to St. David's the trowel used by his Mother to lay the first stone. He also gave to the Church the key Mrs Savory had used to officially open the Church on Wednesday, 19th November, 1924. The preacher at the Opening Service was Rev. John Hornabrook of the Chapel Committee, Manchester.

The monies to pay for the new Church came from the stonelayers £495, subscriptions £157, collections, etc. £723, sale of the Warren Mission £305, sale of the Craig y don Mission £995, monies left over after the sale of St. John's Manse, Mostyn Street and the purchase of the new Manse £2081 and a grant from the Wesleyan Chapel Committee, Manchester, £500. The cost of the Chapel without the Sunday School but including the land was £7630. To reduce the debt a three day Floral Bazaar was held in the Town Hall, Llandudno, March 4th to 6th, 1925. The Bazaar raised £1250.

When the final accounts were paid there was left a debt of £708. This debt was to remain for many years. As well as the money which had been raised to pay the accounts many people gave the Church gifts of furnishings. The Harmonium which was used before the organ was installed was bought by money raised and a donation given by Mrs F. Holland. Mr Arthur Byrom gave the Pulpit Bible and Hymn Book. The following were also gifts: two individual cup communion sets, 10 oak collection plates and the hymn board by Mr A. B. Clark, the brass flower vase for the communion table by Mr A. J. Davis, Italian Marble Baptismal Font and press for books by Mr W. and Mr Ivor Dobinson (Mr Ivor Dobinson also made and carved the cover for the font), 200 hymn books and 12 tune books by Mr F. Holland, 100 Sunday School Books and 12 large type hymn books by Mr Stephen Holland. Miss Molly Holland gave a bound Communion Service book and 100 communion books and Mrs T. Horrocks, a Brussels carpet for the Chancel and pulpit. A gold lettered Notice Board for the front of the Church was given by Mr F. Lucas. Mr and Mrs M. L. Mudd gave the Communion Table and Communion Chairs. The Brussels carpet within the Communion area and the kneeling cushion was given by Mr and Mrs A. E. Pearson. Mrs T. H. Port gave the Communion Linen table cloth and napkins. Miss Savory gave an embroidered Communion Table cloth and the Pulpit Fall. Mrs D. Savory and Miss K Savory gave a wooden tablet with a quotation for the Minister's Vestry. Miss K Savory gave carpet covers for the pews (in memory of her Father). Mr C. E. Smith gave in memory of his Father a table and two chairs for the Minister's Vestry. Mrs Shorter gave a cloth for the Minister's Vestry table. Mr E. Spencer gave the door mats. Mr T. Gregory gave the pulpit timepiece, Miss Harper gave chairs, Mr E. Davies and Miss Coppick gave the umbrella stands and Mr Ivor Dobinson gave the Bas Relief of the Last Supper behind the Communion Table (and made the frame for it.)

St. David's and the previous Craig y don Churches had always been Mission Chapels of St. John's Wesleyan Church, Llandudno. At the Annual Leader's Meeting of St. John's, held on December 12th, 1924, it was agreed that St. David's was now a Church in its own right, and it would have its own Leaders' Meetings.

In recognition of the success of St. David's as a Church, there was a Thanksgiving Service held on Wednesday, 25th March 1925, which was proceeded by two sittings for tea in the 'Old Tin Tabernacle.'

The next project was to build a Sunday School. After much planning the building was opened on Wednesday, July 28th. The Sunday School was twice enlarged. On October 9th, 1932, the organ, built by Ainscough of Preston and given by Mrs T. Horrocks in memory of her husband was opened.

During the following years St. David's continued to grow and to serve Craig y don.



ST. DAVID'S METHODIST CHURCH, MOSTYN AVENUE

The next adaptation of the building to meet the needs of an ever growing congregation and community in Craig y don was envisaged by the members in the 1980's under the leadership of Rev Donald Ryan. A three phase plan was drawn up to create a larger hall and meeting rooms along with a modern kitchen and toilet facilities. Architect Diane Williams was engaged to create the plans (which had originally been drawn by Mr Harry Hollingworth, one of St David's members) and the fund raising began. This was eventually completed, opened and dedicated on Sept 29th 1992 by Donald, who was by then Chair of the North Wales District.

Our new minister, who joined us on Sept 1st 1992, was Rev. Keith V Gamer. He very quickly picked up the vision of our development and saw the need for it to be moved forward as one further phase rather than the two proposed. The stewards of the time were drawn into his vision of an open, airy coffee lounge, alongside the enlarged hall with a modern well equipped kitchen placed centrally to serve both facilities. The proposed toilet block would also provide facilities for the disabled along with a baby changing area for use by young families who attended with their children, the youngest of whom would be safely cared for in the crèche room. All this could be developed in front of the existing hall on the large expanse of lawn at the front of the property and accessed by all with the help of ramps as well as steps. This new development would abut the side of the church thus utilising the arched windows as features in the coffee lounge.

The sanctuary was also discussed and it was proposed that the choir stalls and pews be replaced with chairs to create a space for alternative forms of worship, for example, worship in the round, a new mobile communion table, prayers around the cross (a large mobile wooden cross to be placed on the floor in the centre of the sanctuary.) Another proposal was to remove the stained glass windows, replacing them with clear glass so that we could see out and the community could see in. Some of these suggestions were contentious!

Much discussion took place over many months, but Keith's initial vision became the vision of the Church as a whole and after some compromises (only half the pews were replaced) and with the help of architect Diane Williams again, the plans were accepted by Church Council. This was the start of a very exciting but exhausting period! £285,000 was needed so, led by the stewards, a fund raising team was formed. Everyone became involved. Hand written letters tapped every available grant, car boot sales took place on wet and windy Bodafon fields at 6am on Saturdays, as well as table tops sales, Sunday lunches in private homes, auctions of promises, use of talent monies - the list goes on and on. This vision was picked up by the surrounding community who supported us in our efforts and encouraged us to continue. This large sum was raised in 18 months - how did we manage it? We all pushed each other along with one purpose and picked each other up when needed. It was hard work but **so** rewarding - not just the financial gain to meet the project need, but the camaraderie which developed and the friendships which grew between people who had previously just met on a Sunday in worship.

When the initial work began to create the ancillary premises, nothing stopped. All coffee mornings, meetings, brownies, etc. continued to meet in the sanctuary – strange at first. And likewise when the work was being carried out in the sanctuary, worship continued in the hall.

Sometime later the stained glass window at the back of the chancel (which had suffered damage on several occasions from over-exuberant young football players in the back alley) was blocked up and a cross, made from the same wood as the new communion table and lit from behind, was put in place on the new wall.

Eventually everything was completed and the dedication of the refurbished sanctuary and the opening of the new ancillary premises took place on Nov 11th 1997. Without the vision,

enthusiasm, lively imagination and drive of Rev Keith Garner, we might still be thinking about these possibilities and not have such a wonderful facility which is now widely used, not just by ourselves and our own groups, but by the wider community in Craig y don, as well as the Circuit and District of the Methodist Church.

Quoting from Keith's message at the dedication service:

"We are given the opportunity to offer our praise to God for the way in which he has blessed us. There have been many ingredients to the successful completion of our building project. As we look to the future, I hope and pray St David's will continue to develop. Twenty years from now the ideas we have had will be part of history and new ideas will be generated. I hope the Church will be sufficiently strong to gain a perception of what God wants for us"

So here we are now in 2014, celebrating our 90th anniversary, remembering all that is past and making the most of all that is present. As part of our celebrations we have built a new wheelchair accessible sensory garden along the side of the church, which has been under-used to date. We want it to become a further part of our contribution to the community of Craig y don, and through it to offer an invitation to all to participate in God's work in the area.

Our theme for the year has been "Growing for God," and so we pray for the future, that we are able to continue to grasp the vision of God's kingdom plans in this neighbourhood of Craig y don, and that we can be a part of them! May God's Spirit energise us and sustain us over the coming years as we seek God's path for our life together.

As it says on the plaque in the coffee lounge:

"Praise Him for all that is past
And trust Him for all that's to come."

With thanks to Rev Donald Ryan for the first part of this story (taken from his booklet written for the 60th anniversary) and to Hilary Roberts for the final section, bringing the story up to the present day.