

Appendix
Faith & Religion
Places of Worship in Porthcawl
1640-2019

Nonconformist chapels and churches built in Porthcawl between 1788 and 2019, in chronological order:

Nottage Chapel was, reportedly, originally a house, although it is suggested that there was perhaps a row of houses, in the centre of Nottage village that was converted into a chapel in 1788 by the General Baptists. The group had its roots in the Nonconformist Cause in Nottage as early as 1647 and was led by Lewis Thomas from 1672 and then by Jonathan Francis. From 1788, its leader was Thomas David. Doctrinal differences led the Baptist group to split from the General Baptists by the beginning of the 19th Century and the chapel became associated with the Unitarian assembly and appointed a Unitarian minister in 1806. The current building dates from 1847 (Higgins, 1968; Morgan, 1987).

Hope Chapel is in Newton Nottage Road, near to the Globe garage in Newton. The Independent Welsh Congregational group that it served was initially part of the Welsh Nonconformist Cause and had begun in a house named Bethel in 1808 before moving to Hope Chapel (Morgan, 1987).

Hope Chapel was constructed in 1827 and opened in 1828. In 1887, it was rebuilt in Gothic mode as a 2-storey structure and had a long-wall entry plan. Once enlarged and renovated, it became the religious centre of worship for an English-speaking Independent denomination. The section of this Appendix relating to Tabernacl in Fenton Place, Porthcawl (please see below) also has a more detailed account of subsequent developments that affected Hope Chapel (British Listed Buildings, 1998; Coflein, 2010).

Hope Chapel is currently the centre for the activities of the Grace Community Church in Porthcawl. Grace Community Church is part of the Advance Movement in a global movement of churches.

Bethel Chapel in South Road, was built in 1865 and intended to be a place of worship for followers of the Calvinistic Methodist

faith. The land on which its stands was donated by the Sibberings who came to Porthcawl from Merthyr Tydfil. George Sibbering, who was of the Independent faith, ran a timber yard at the rear of Railway Terrace (now Hillsboro Place) and a timber workshop in the Jennings Warehouse. He and wife lived in Windmill House in South Road and offered the Methodists some land in order that they could have somewhere to worship in Porthcawl. In the event, it was decided that a larger chapel was needed thus the original structure became the chapel house and a residential dwelling. Bethel Chapel opened in 1886 and not 1885 as shown on the building's façade (Morgan, 1996)

Gilgal Chapel is in Park Place in Old Porthcawl. During the 19th Century, the Baptist movement was initially weak in the town and Baptists first met as a group in various cottages and the Railway Tavern in South Road. The group subsequently came under the wing of Pisgah Baptist Church in Pyle and, by 1867, was planning to have its own place of worship which they intended to name Gilgal. Gilgal Chapel was accordingly opened in 1869 as a branch of Pisgah Baptist Church. Shortly after, in 1872, the Baptists separated from Pisgah and became a separate group (Morgan, 1987).

In time, the Baptist congregations outgrew the original chapel building in Park Place. It was extended in 1923 to become the present Gilgal Chapel with a seating capacity for 750 people (Morgan, 1987).

Highfield United Reformed Church in Highfield Avenue in Old Porthcawl is now defunct and in its place is a sheltered housing complex for older people. When operational as a church prior to the 1960's, Highfield was used by worshippers of the English Congregational faith. The group first occupied a site in New Road which had been donated by Caroline Brogden in 1871 and later became a Masonic Hall. The group then moved to the now demolished Stoneleigh and the Coliseum cinema before moving to the converted skating rink and school hall in Highfield Avenue in 1918 (Morgan, 1987).

Nottage Unitarian Chapel in 2018



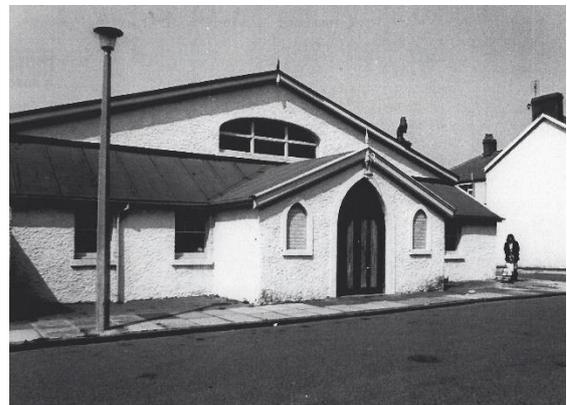
Gilgal Baptist Chapel in 2018



Hope Chapel in 2018



Highfield United Reformed Church circa 1980's prior to its demolition.



Bethel Chapel in 2018



(Reproduced from Around Porthcawl Newton and Nottage (1996) by Keith Morgan)

During the aftermath of WWII, Highfield Church provided temporary school accommodation for Porthcawl primary school children until the present Nottage Primary School in Suffolk Place was opened in 1952. Highfield United Reformed Church amalgamated with the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1984 (Morgan, 1987).

The Wesley Methodist Church has maritime origins in Porthcawl. Reputedly, there was a small mission church near Porthcawl Harbour that began following an open-air service of thanks in 1844 after the rescue of sailors from a ship in stormy seas off the Porthcawl coastline. James Brogden later donated the land on the corner of Lias Road on which the Wesleyan Methodists built their chapel. The building has been much improved and enlarged over time (Bennett, 1960's; Higgins, 1967).

In the post-war period, the old Wesleyan Chapel, along with Highfield Church, also served as a temporary school for Porthcawl children of primary school-age, before the present Nottage Primary School in Suffolk Place opened in 1952.

Trinity Methodist and United Reform Church came into being in its present form after a merger between Highfield United Reformed Church and the Wesley Methodist Church in 1984. It is a highly active denomination and its present place of worship is centrally situated on a busy corner of Lias Road. The Church is a sought after meeting venue for many organisations of all generations such as Rainbows, Brownies, SHOUT (for older people) as well as the **Society**.

The Masonic Temple in Sandy Lane is used by Jehovah's Witnesses as the group's current centre of religious activity. The site of this building was originally a chapel of worship for those of the English Independent faith. Although it was completed in 1871, the land on which the chapel stood was later conveyed to the Masonic Hall Co. Ltd. The **Society** is not aware of the date when it became a centre for followers of the Jehovah Witness faith.

Tabernacl Capel yr Annibynwr aka the Welsh Congregational Chapel is located in Fenton Place in Old Porthcawl and is a place of worship for followers of the Welsh Congregationalist Church in Porthcawl. The building is usually known as Tabernacl and has acquired a reputation for musical performance and appreciation.

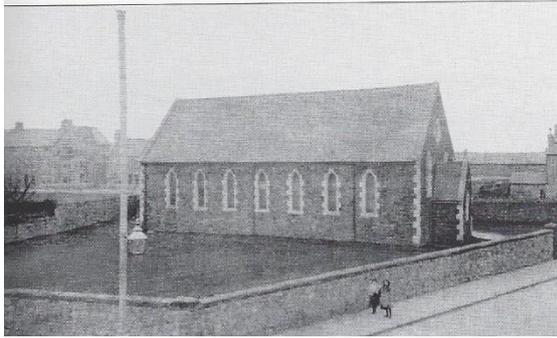
The Welsh Congregationalist group formed part of the early Nonconformist Cause in Newton Nottage parish during the 17th Century. It was originally established in Hope Chapel, Newton, but, by 1916, the number of its followers had grown to such an extent that the group had outstripped Hope Chapel's congregational capacity. After using several differing venues for their meetings, the group made the decision to start a new Welsh-speaking church in Porthcawl town itself, leaving Hope Chapel to continue holding its services in the English language (Morgan, 1987).

Wanting to spread the Christian word to incomers into Porthcawl, the Welsh Congregational group first held their meetings in the YMCA in John Street, thereafter in the Celtic Café, also in John Street. The group later obtained a storehouse and land in Fenton Place and the refurbished storehouse was used as a place of worship until 1931 (Morgan, 1987).

The present Tabernacl was opened in 1931 at a cost of £4,300 and has a seating capacity of 400. It was designed by W D Walters of Tonypany and constructed by John Thomas of Bronwydd. Tabernacl is a contemporary building to the Grand Pavilion on the Waterfront and is classed as a Grade II Listed building CADW ID: 19366. The structure is valued for its unusual façade and its interesting combination of traditional 19th Century chapel plan and 1930's style Art Deco style interior motifs and furnishings (British Listed Buildings, 1998).

Arlington Road Presbyterian Chapel in Arlington Place was initially formed by the Cavinistic Methodist church for an English Presbyterian group. The group had begun in 1859 with a Sunday School in the loft of the Victoria Public House on Station Hill.

Wesley Methodist Church circa 1870



(Reproduced from *Porthcawl* (2006) by John David)

Trinity Methodist and United Reform Church in 2018



Masonic Temple - Jehovah Witness in 2018



Tabernacl Capel yr Annibynwyr aka the Welsh Congregational Church in 2018



Arlington Road Presbyterian Chapel in 2018



The English Presbyterian group were then given land in South Road by the Sibberings to build their own place of worship but the group's growth in numbers was hesitant. Eventually, the group seceded from Bethel on amicable terms, holding their services in the English language and then, it too, moved to the Celtic Café in John Street. When the English Presbyterian congregation outgrew the Celtic Café, a site was obtained for a chapel in Arlington Place which opened its doors in 1925. The chapel is included in the National Monuments Record and chapel works are cited as a stained glass window with images of Christ in Glory with Saints and other characters from the Bible (Morgan, 1987; University of Wales, 2019).

The Gospel Hall in Lias Road is the place of worship for the Plymouth or Christian Brethren. The group began in Porthcawl circa 1903 and was initiated by Alex Smith, who was a coastguard. Its first meetings were held on the Waterfront although the group's later gatherings were in a hired room in a house in John Street. The group subsequently bought its current site in Lias Road where it opened its original chapel in 1909. The Gospel Hall has since been enlarged and expanded to its present size (Morgan, 1987).

Noddfa, aka Capel y Bedyddwyr in Philadelphia Road is the dedicated place of worship for the Welsh Baptist group in Porthcawl. Construction of the chapel began in 1939 and, despite the exigencies of WWII and restrictions on building activity, was allowed to continue until the chapel was completed. Noddfa opened in August 1940 at a cost of almost £5,000 and is said to be the only place of worship in the UK to have been exempted from wartime building restrictions (Morgan, 1996).

St Mary's Church, Trecco Bay is an interdenominational church and the newest addition to Porthcawl's lexicon of places of worship. According to Joseph family accounts and St Mary's own website, the church was included in the large Trecco Bay holiday site in 1953 as an 'experiment'. The intention was to provide somewhere for gatherings and a place of worship for

campers and caravanners to attend interdenominational gatherings and religious services whilst staying at the site in Trecco Bay, Porthcawl (The Parish of Newton Nottage, 2016).

The Church was originally a small building hitherto used as a garage, and was constructed at a central point on the site that had a large noticeboard and a loud-speaker providing information and details of services amongst other things. Resident staff were accommodated in tents and, it is believed, that the A-frame shape of the Church was inspired by the original tent used as a makeshift place of worship in the early days of camping at Trecco Bay (The Parish of Newton Nottage, 2016).

St Mary's, Trecco, was initially instigated by the Anglican Church in Wales and was consecrated in the summer of 1964. However, the running of the Church is now a shared venture by Churches Together in Porthcawl. A programme of Services on Sundays, weekday activities and refreshments for families is organised annually throughout August and other activities during the rest of the year include a Carols by Candlelight service in the festive season (The Parish of Newton Nottage, 2016).

Gospel Hall in 2018



Noddfa, aka Capel y Bedyddwyr in 1940



(Reproduced from *Around Porthcawl Newton and Nottage* (1996) by Keith Morgan)

St Mary's Church, Trecco Bay in 2018



Noddfa, in April 2019



The Anglican Church in Wales

From the mid-19th Century onwards, the advancement of the Nonconformist Cause led to a dramatic, progressive diminution of Anglican power in Wales. For example, Church rates ended in 1870, the tithe was reorganised in 1880, the Establishment's pivotal position in education was eroded and Anglican control of local government was replaced by the introduction of elected county councils in 1889 (BBC, 2018).

The start of the 20th Century was momentous for faith and religion in Wales as Nonconformity and its influence was further boosted by the 1904-1905 Welsh Revival. The Welsh Church Act of 1914, implemented after WWI in 1920, separated the Anglican community in Wales into 4 dioceses known as the Church in Wales. Under the provisions of the Welsh Church Act (1914), the Church in Wales was simultaneously disestablished from the state placing the Anglican Church in a similar position to that of other faiths and religions in Wales (BBC, 2018).

The Anglican faith in Porthcawl

The disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales and simultaneous formation of the Church in Wales had little practical impact on the observation of the Anglican faith in Porthcawl as:

The Church of St John the Baptist in Newton village remained the symbol of the Anglican faith in the parish of Newton Nottage and its religious and secular activities were, and arguably still are, firmly embedded in the community. It is of note that the historic St John's remained the only Anglican place of worship in the parish of Newton Nottage until 1866, when:

A Sailor's Mission Church was built in 1866 near to the newly expanded Porthcawl Dock to cater for the spiritual needs of seafarers, port workers and railwaymen (Morgan, 1987). When it became too small to meet demand, Anglican worshippers decamped to:

The National School in Lias Road in 1873 which is now the site of a Co-op supermarket. The National School was an Anglican establishment, usually referred to as 'the National' that functioned as somewhere for Porthcawl townspeople to worship until it also became too small to cater for the swelling population. A Sunday School and weekday services were held there until 1892 (Morgan, 1987). Whereupon, the National School reverted to its social and educative role and:

The First All Saints Church, made of iron, was built in 1892 in Victoria Avenue on the corner with Church Place on land donated by Lord Wimborne. By 1914, it had also become too cramped for the increased Anglican congregation of the ever-expanding Porthcawl. In 1914, therefore, the iron church was dismantled and despatched to the Anglican community in Maesteg where it became a mission hall (Morgan, 1987). Its place was taken by:

All Saints Church designed by George Halliday, Llandaff Diocesan Architect in 1909 and built between 1912 and 1914 at a cost of £9750 paid for by public subscription. All Saints, as it is known locally, is a Grade II Listed structure CADW ID: 11372 constructed in 15th Century Gothic style with stone from the Forest of Dean and roof slates from Dinorwic. It seats 600 people and was consecrated by the Bishop of Llandaff in 1914, just before the outbreak of WWI. The Lady-chapel and choir vestry were added in the 1960's and designed by architect Trevor Roderick (British Listed Buildings, 1998).

By 1914, both Newton and Porthcawl had Anglican places of worship. However, Nottage, the oldest part of the parish, was without its own Anglican church, possibly, it is thought, due to its prominent role in the Nonconformist Cause and its advancement in Wales (Morgan, 1987). That is, until 1948, when shortly after the end of WWII:

The Church of St David was erected in 1948 on land donated by J K Blundell enabling Nottage to have its own small Anglican place of religious worship (Morgan, 1987).

The Church of St John the Baptist, Newton in 2018



The National School, Lias Road, now Old School Road, date unknown.



All Saints Church in 2018



(Reproduced from *Porthcawl Newton and Nottage* (1987) by Alun Morgan)

The original All Saints Church



The Church of St David, Nottage



(Reproduced from *Porthcawl Newton and Nottage* (1987) by Alun Morgan)

The Roman Catholic faith in Porthcawl

The official absence of tolerance towards adherents of the Roman Catholic faith lasted from the Elizabethan era until the 19th Century. In the parish of Newton Nottage, as elsewhere in the British Isles, Roman Catholics had to meet in secret and priests don disguises in order to observe their faith and/or conduct a service. Throughout the parish, Roman Catholics used Sker House in Ton Kenfig as place of worship and the building had special recesses, otherwise known as priest-holes, to harbour worshippers and men of the Roman Catholic cloth.

It was not until the 19th Century that Roman Catholics could worship openly without fear of reprisals. And, in Porthcawl's case, it was not until 1904 that a Roman Catholic meeting place materialised in the town in the form of a wooden building in New Road that became known as Waddle Hall. The Hall was founded by Jessie and Clara Waddle and enlarged in 1908. Waddle Hall was utilised by members of the Roman Catholic community as a place of worship until 1969' It was then replaced by a dedicated modern structure built by F R Bates, Son and Price, named Our Lady, Star of the Sea. Waddle Hall remains *in situ* next to Our Lady, Star of the Sea and now acts as a church hall and venue for activities and events (Morgan, 1987).

Sker House under renovation (date unknown)



(Reproduced from British Listed Buildings (1998))

Our Lady, Star of the Sea in 2018



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