

WESLEY CHAPEL

CAMBORNE



A BRIEF HISTORY

Early Days

Much has been written about John Wesley the 18th Century evangelist, and founder of the Methodist Church. It was in 1743 that John Wesley first visited Camborne, and stayed with Mr Harris at Rosewarne. The home of Mr Harris became the first meeting place of the Methodists in Camborne.

The First Chapel

Outgrowing Rosewarne, they moved in 1802 to use premises in Gas Lane, and then in 1806 built their first Chapel. The Donald Thomas Centre today occupies this site, and prior to this the building was Camborne Literary Institute. (*No 10 on the town trail*). Sir Richard Vyvyan of Trelowarren Manor near Helston had made the building of a new chapel possible by giving them the land. The Vyvyan family were owners of much of Camborne at that time. Visitors may notice that the name Vyvyan has been used in street names, and some public houses in the town. Camborne's main street is named Trelowarren, after the Manor.

Wesley Chapel

In 1814 the numbers attending worship had increased to such an extent that their building of 1806 was no longer large enough. Again Sir Richard Vyvyan provided a plot of land on which the present chapel was built, at a cost of £2450. The imposing granite front was the gift of the Pendarves family, important land and mine owners in the area.

By April 1827 sufficient monies had been raised to commence work, and on the 18th April that year the foundation stone was laid, and just 15 months later, on July 27th the chapel was opened.

The rear premises, today the Wesley Centre, formerly the Sunday school, were built later, and visitors are invited to view the fine stone structure from Victoria Street. Here you will see a number of memorial stones showing dates of construction including the foundation stone, which was laid on November 14th 1873 by Sir John St Aubyn of Clowance.

Early in the 20th century the family moved from Clowance to their other mansion, at Pencarrow. Clowance Estate is now a hospitality and holiday complex. The family remain at Pencarrow House which is located between Bodmin and Wadebridge.

The wall tablets around the interior of the church include some of the early Church Leaders. One tablet is of George Smith. He was the son-in-law of William Bickford, the inventor of the safety fuse, which was used in conjunction with explosives in the local mines.

The bust of George Smith was the work of Neville Northey Burnard, examples of whose work can be seen at Truro museum. The Bickford Smith factory was situated at Tuckingmill on the Eastern side of Camborne. The family later moved from Camborne to Trevarno, near Helston.



The famous gardens of Trevarno are open to the public. Another memorial tablet is of Josiah Thomas, the mine captain of Dolcoath Mine. In its day it was the deepest tin mine in the world. It is now preserved as part of the Mining World Heritage Site. Lowenac, the Thomas family home, is now the Lowenac Hotel.

Architectural Changes

Over the years much has changed from the original design. The first interior was to house the maximum number of people. The seating would have reflected the present layout of the balcony, with the side seats on the ground floor facing into the centre, the centre seats closely built for maximum capacity.



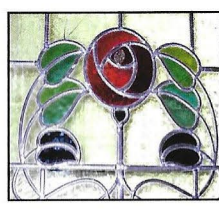
In 1845 the first pipe organ was installed, powered it is thought by a system of bellows powered by water.

A similar pumping system can be seen at Centenary Chapel, which is situated at the far end of Trelowarren Street.

The decorative ceiling roses were not only architectural features but served as the ventilation system for fumes from gas lighting.



In 1887 the interior was again remodelled when the seating was changed with the side seats now facing forward, and the original sash windows replaced by the stained glass windows you see today.

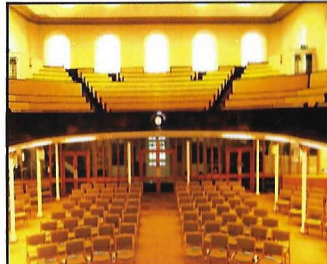


Again in 1911 there was another major redesign when the main entrance was changed to the present arrangement, and the gallery stairs were brought out to separate doors directly on to the courtyard. It was probably at this time also that the

internal doors were altered introducing decorative glass, with the rose patterns being in the style of Charles Rene Mackintosh; the pulpit and choir were also redesigned, and electricity was installed for lighting.

The latest change in the internal layout of the chapel was in the 1970s when the interior was again remodelled to give a more spacious and modern setting for worship, the concourse built, and the access to the gallery once more brought back inside. In 2009 the pews of the 1970s were removed and replaced by chairs, and provision for audio and video presentations installed.

Wesley Chapel is a living building that has undergone many changes to reflect the needs of each generation, whilst at the same time retaining the grand design that so inspired previous generations.



The architecture, furnishing, and facilities makes this Chapel not only a Landmark Building, but a dynamic place of worship!