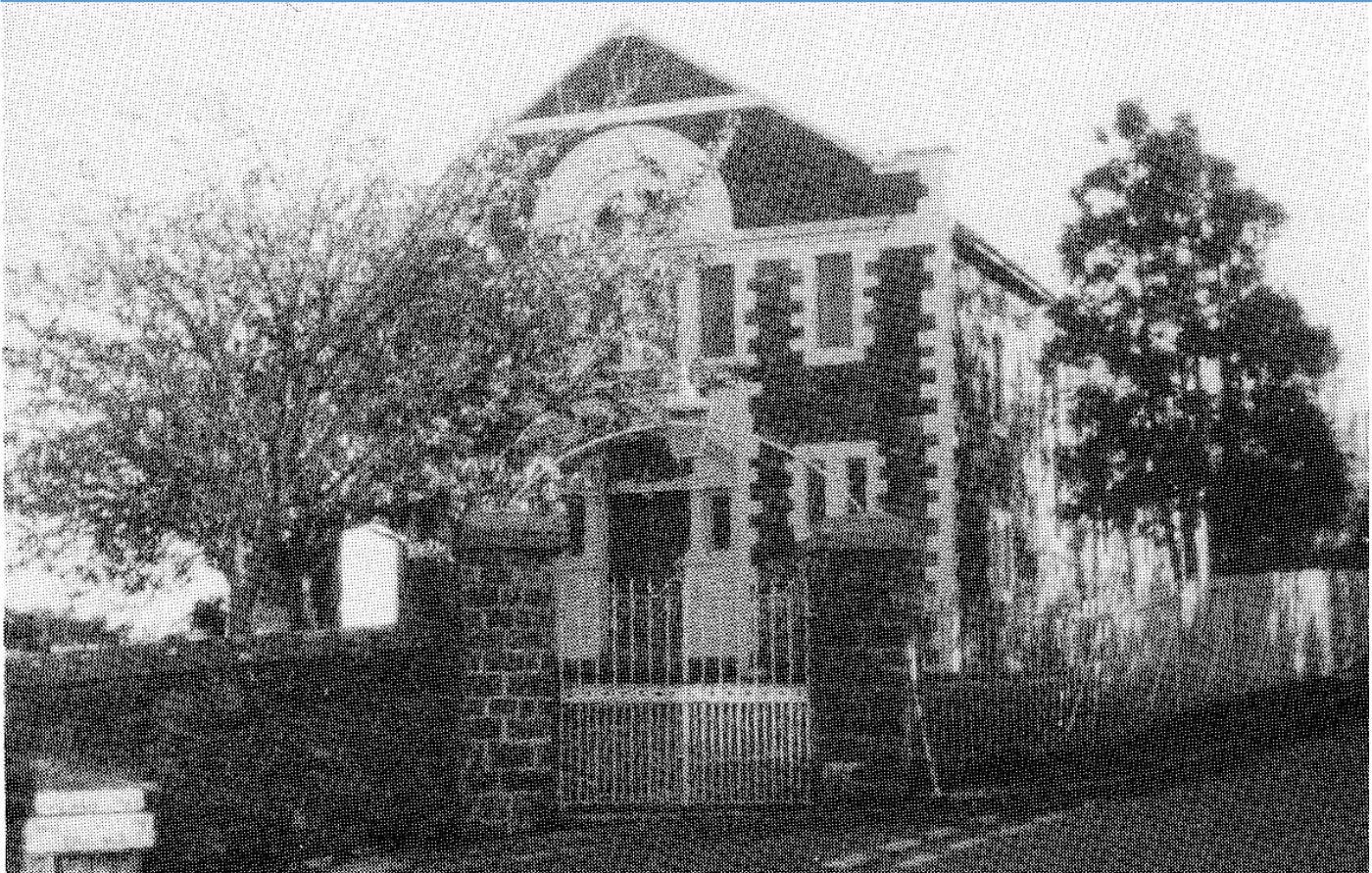


A Tale of Two Galilees

W. Grenville Thomas



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More information on Galilee Chapel can be found on the
Llangwm Local History Society website
<https://www.llangwmlocalhistorysociety.org.uk/galileebaptistchapel.html>

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The arresting landscape of Pembrokeshire is enhanced or disfigured, according to the point of view, by hundreds of Nonconformist chapels, whose construction was prompted by the recurrent religious revivals of the Nineteenth Century.

In many instances, the much reduced present-day congregations still worship in original buildings, which have undergone substantial, even radical, alteration. But in the once singular and almost notoriously pious riverside village of Llangwm, the Baptist congregation has occupied two buildings – for half-a-century concurrently – during the eventful 160 years of the church's history.

Dissent

In his pioneering article in 1947, 'Disaffection and Dissent in Pembrokeshire', Major Francis Jones detected smidges of Non-Conformity in the Llangwm district long before the advent of the chapels.

After his ejection by the Act of Uniformity (1662), the Rev. Peregrine Phillips, Rector of Llangwm and Freystrop, established an Independent congregation at a farm on Dredgeman Hill, and became the accredited pastor (1665) of the Haverfordwest Green Meeting. Among his patrons was the gentleman or yeoman Moses Longman, of Llangwm, who, according to the Hearth Tax returns of 1670 (West Wales Historical Records Vol. 10) was one of the two most substantial men in the parish. Longman was twice (1669 and 1681) indicted in Great Sessions for his refusal to attend the services of the Established Church, but he might well have been an isolated instance.

The next traces of dissent are over a century later. Thomas, Martha and Mary, the children of John and Candace Brown, of Hook, were baptised at the Moravian Chapel, Haverfordwest, between 1803 and 1808, and James, the infant son of Thomas and Sarah Roach, of Llangwm, were baptised (April, 1814) at Tabernacle in the County Town.

Baptisms

The real origins of the Baptist cause in the village of Llangwm can be traced back to a religious revival which took place in the Llangwm – Hook – Sardis triangle during the years after the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815).

According to the recollections of a certain William Lloyd, of St. Petrox, Pembroke, published in *The Pembrokeshire Baptist* (August 1880) and extensively quoted in the Rev. R. C. Roberts *Historical Sketches...* (1907), a lively and productive preaching campaign was conducted in the area by the Rev. James Hughes Thomas (1789-1861), the co-pastor (1817-1831) of Molleston Baptist Chapel. Dubbed 'Thomas Waterholmes' after his birthplace in the parish of Wiston, this robust man crossed by boat to Hook Quay and preached with compelling eloquence to curious crowds on the banks of the Cleddau. Many – eight on one occasion – were baptised in the river and were subsequently received into membership at Molleston. The register of that church for the 1820s contains the name of three Llangwm

families – David and Martha George, of Great Nash, and their two children, George and Martha Jones and their three children, and David and Ann Lloyd and their one child.

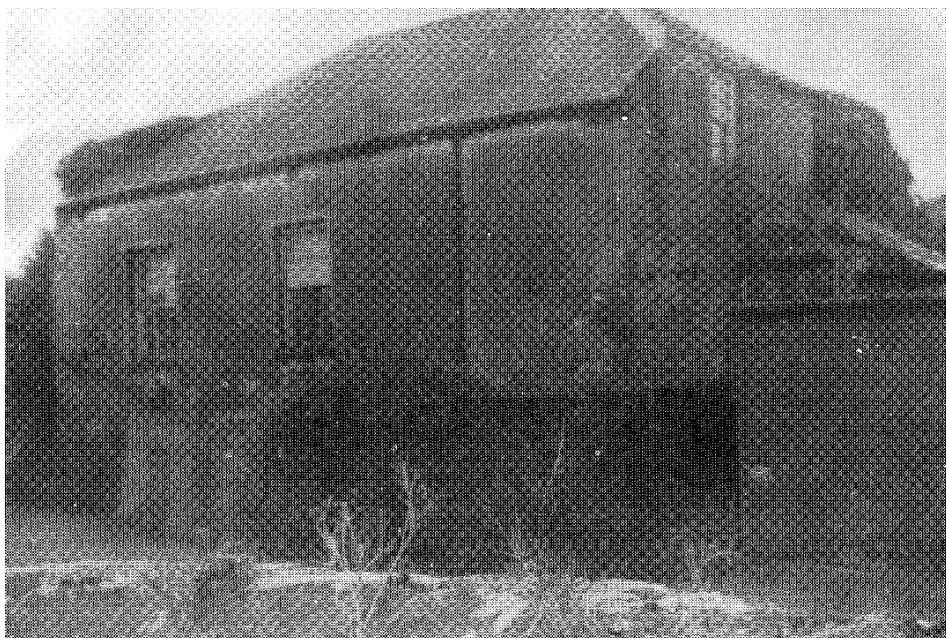
The unrelenting hostility of Parson Morris, Rector of Llangwm (1799-1833), to the holding of conventicles in his parish compelled these incorrigible dissenters to hold discreet meetings. When he threatened to raise tithes as a deterrent, they reacted by joining with others to build the small first chapel at Sardis (1822). The chapel was attended by a Llangwm contingent, who during turbulent weather used the roadside barn on Butter Hill.

Encouraged by the Rev. Henry Evans (1799-1874), the minister of Sardis and a shipwright at Pembroke Dockyard, they decided to build their own place of worship in their own village.

First

They acquired the lease of a site from John Henry Phillips, of Williamston, later to be M. P. for Haverfordwest (1852-68) and for Pembrokeshire (1868-76). It was part of Butter Hill Farm, but was neither prime nor spacious. Previously occupied by an old thatched cottage, and with a well at one end, it was situated in the hamlet of Guildford and just within the Burton parish. Built of rendered red-sandstone, most of which was hewn from Guildford Pill, the first chapel was aligned parallel with the road and protected by a small gated forecourt. It was the proximity of the chapel to a tidal inlet, cluttered with boats and fishing paraphernalia, which suggested an affinity between its members and the Galilean disciples of Jesus and which decided the choice of name.

After a historic Covenanting service, held on the cold, damp and gloomy afternoon of Christmas Day, 1830, the opening services (April 1st, 1831) were conducted by the Rev. Shem Evans, of Short Lane, Milford Haven, and the Rev. David Jones (1789-1841) of Bethesda, Haverfordwest, later the author of a Welsh *History of the Baptists* (1839). The trustees of the chapel building were Rev. Henry Davies, of Llangloffan, and the solicitor deacon William Rees, of Haverfordwest, two very active members of the Association who were to be largely responsible for the establishment of Haverfordwest Baptist College (1839). The precise names of the original 30 members and the 20 clause Confession of Faith (1833) have been rediscovered, and are fully set out in the official history.



The first Galilee Chapel. It was demolished in 1962.

For the first two-and-a-half years, the Guildford chapel was linked with Sardis in a joint pastorate. But on December 25th, 1833, the link was severed, and Galilee became an independent pastorate, with the Rev. Henry Evans, of Llanstadwell, as its first minister (1833-1861). Although the book membership remained at little more than 30 for many years, attendances were much more impressive. The returns for the Ecclesiastical Census of 1851 reveal that on Sunday, March 30th, the morning congregation numbered 160 and the evening 170, and that the average total Sunday turn-out was 280.

Second

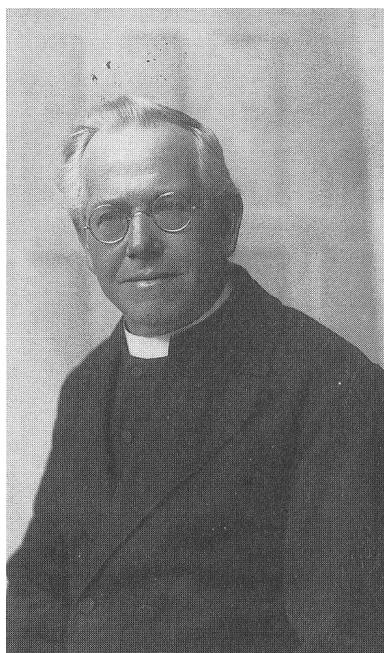
The real breakthrough came with the stirring ministry (1877-1880) of Cwmavon-born the Rev. David Hussey (1852-1930) when the formal membership doubled to approach 70. It was during the significantly long ministry (1883-1925) of the Rev. William Davies that increasing numbers created mounting dissatisfaction with the cramping dimensions of the first chapel.

Having committed itself to the building of a more spacious sanctuary (1897), the church was greatly heartened when John Frederick Lort Phillips (1854-1926), the squire of Lawrenny, generously donated a well-apportioned large prime site on the corner junction of Butter Hill and Williamston Terrace. With George Morgan, of Carmarthen, as the architect and Messrs. Davies and Morgan, of Pembroke, as the main contractor, a chapel capable of seating 350 people was built for just over £1,600.

Surviving copies of *The South Pembrokeshire Baptist Herald* (1901-1909) confirm that on the official opening day (Wednesday, September 14th, 1904), the special preachers for the three services were two of the most distinguished men of the religious life of Wales – Dr. Thomas Witton-Davies, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Literature at Bangor Baptist College, and Dr. William Edwards, Principal of Cardiff Baptist College, later President of the Baptist Union of Wales (1905) and of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland (1911). The offertory amounted to £175-3-2d on the day when not even the large new building could contain the number of people who attended. For the next six Sundays, there were special services conducted by a succession of invited preachers.



Rev. David Hussey



Rev. Daniel M. Pryse



Rev. R. W. Richards

Fates

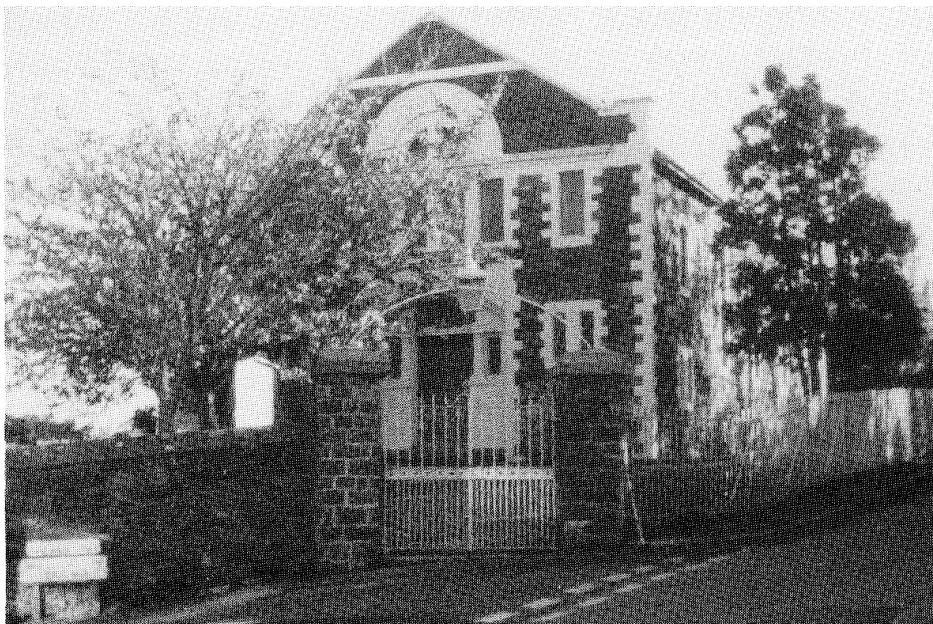
During the Twentieth Century, the two Galilee chapels have experienced very different treatment. For the first 50 years, the original chapel regularly housed the Sunday School, and on at least two occasions (1923 and 1948) the Sunday services were transferred to it, while the second chapel underwent redecoration.

During 1927, repairs carried out on it were so substantial that a re-dedication service was conducted by the Rev. Anne Lodwick, of Cresswell Quay, the first female Baptist minister in Wales. However, when eventually, its advanced state of deterioration made it a public hazard, the original chapel was demolished in 1962. Part of the inner wall was retained, but the site was turned into the Chapel car park.

The pampering regular attention which the second chapel has received is reflected in its present immaculate condition. During the dynamic ministry (1911-1926) of the unforgettable Rev. Daniel M. Pryse (1860-1940), when evening congregations averaged around 300, the chapel was equipped with its own generator and electrical system.

Soon after the Second World War, the interior was modified and redecorated, and coal-fired central heating (1948) was installed. During the devoted ministry (1954-1983) of the late Rev. R. W. Richards, the vestry was extended into a sizeable schoolroom, with up-to-date kitchen and toilet facilities (1962), the main chapel was re-roofed with Marley tiles (1964), the central heating system was converted to oil (1966), and the interior and exterior were completely redecorated (1970).

Since the Spring of 1987, the exterior has again been redecorated and the leaded side windows have been replaced by attractive triple-glazed replacement windows. The church's present 62 contributing members are aware of the obligation it history has placed upon them.



Galilee Chapel, pictured in 1988.