

## 7. The Churches and Chapels

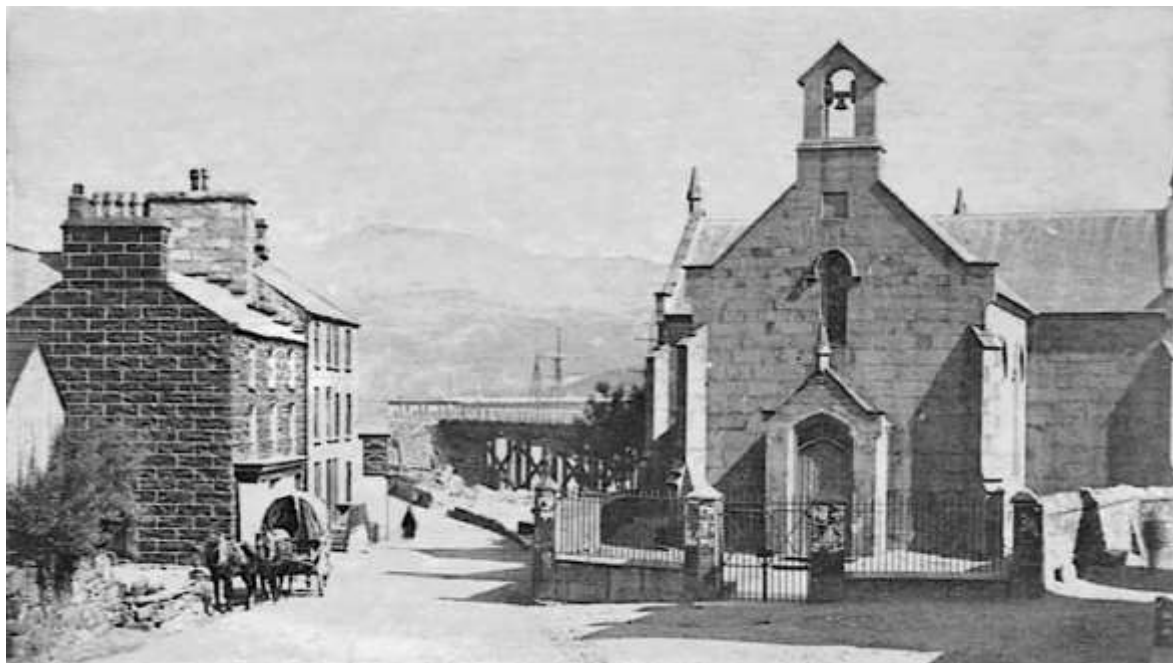
Since 1895 St John's Church has been at the heart of Barmouth life. Here the people of the town have gathered not only to celebrate national events but also to mark the important moments in their lives, at birth, marriage and death. St John's is the home to our Christian community who worship there every week. St John's is surely one of the finest modern churches in Wales and visitors may wonder how this small seaside town came to be graced with such a magnificent almost cathedral-like place of worship.



St Mary and St Bodfan 1872

### **St Mary's and St Bodfan's**

The mother Church of this parish was first built by a 6<sup>th</sup> century Celtic Saint named Bodfan at Llanaber. The Church would be rebuilt during the 13<sup>th</sup> century and would later be known as the Church of St Mary and St Bodfan. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century St Mary's was becoming small for the growing population of the area and the decision was taken in 1824 to build a Chapel of Ease in Barmouth itself.



St David's 1865

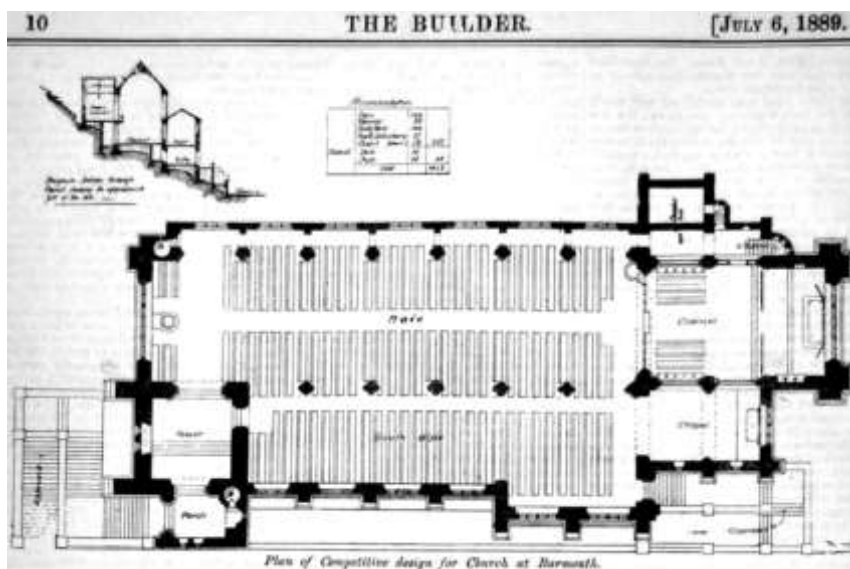
### **St David's**

Built in 1824 and opened in 1830, on the site of a former shipbuilding yard, the new chapel at Barmouth was dedicated to the patron Saint of Wales, St David. Designed by Edward Haycock of Shrewsbury it was designed to hold around 470 people. For some years after its opening, sand drifts proved to be a great source of annoyance to worshippers but with the arrival of the railway line in the 1860s this annoyance vanished. Barmouth was rapidly becoming a holiday destination since the arrival of the railway resulting in more people worshipping in both St Mary's and St David's. Both buildings were full and the then new Rector decided to do something about it.

### **St John's**

During the 1880s Rev'd Edward Hughes managed to get the Parochial Church Council to agree that a new church building was the best way forward for solving the capacity problem at both churches. Rev'd Hughes knew that many wealthy philanthropists had holiday homes in Barmouth and that they were willing to donate funds to the Churches as was demonstrated in the 1850s and 60s with repair work to St Mary's. One wealthy family in particular would eventually become the main donor of funds for the building of the new church. This family owned Plas Mynach and used it as a holiday retreat from their busy lives in Worcestershire. They were the Perrins family of Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce fame.

The Perrins family were able to donate enough to build a large church. During the 1880s the sea would come up to the railway line meaning land was in short supply. The Perrins family also donated some land they had purchased several years earlier. However the land overlooked the town and building the church would be difficult. A competition was held in a National Building Journal to choose a design. The winners were Mr John Douglas and Mr Daniel Fordham of Chester and it suited what Rev'd Hughes wanted from the new church – a building large and ornate in scale.



A competition entry that didn't win

Before work began on the project a lavish ceremony to lay the foundation stone was planned. It was hoped that Queen Victoria would lay the stone as she was touring north Wales in 1889. Since the Queen was unable to attend the ceremony she sent her daughter Princess Beatrice of Battenberg (said to be her favourite) to lay the stone. The ceremony began when she arrived in Barmouth by railway followed by a grand procession up to the site of the new church where the laying of the stone was completed.



Princess Beatrice laying the foundation stone

Work was progressing well on the new building. By 1891, almost two years since beginning the project, the tower was almost complete and all the roofs were ready for their slates to be fitted. Then on the evening of September 11<sup>th</sup> 1891 the tower collapsed into the building below destroying the roof and some of the walls. The architects thought that blasting the rock behind the church, to get more light, may have been the cause. The Rev'd Hughes began a new round of fundraising to complete the church. Mrs Perrins donated the remainder of the funds to complete the work and serve as a memorial to her husband James Dyson Perrins. The church was completed in 1895 and consecrated on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1895.



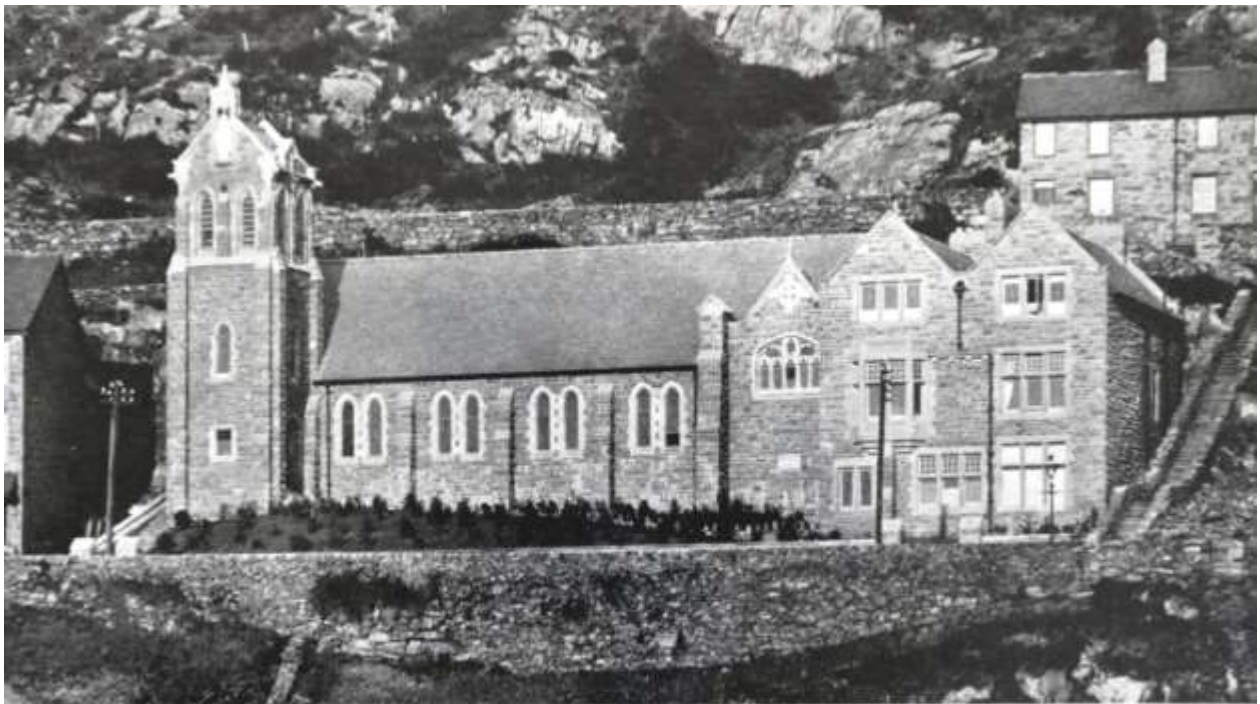
Tower collapse



St John's and the Church Hall

## St Tudwal's

In the 1800s the Catholic community was small in Barmouth and worship occurred in houses as there was no permanent place of worship. The Jesuits holidayed in Barmouth during the 1870s and 1880s and provided for the Catholics during this time. In 1884 a Rev Thomas Donovan was appointed to the Barmouth Mission. He started to raise funds for building a permanent chapel. By 1891 a tin hut chapel was established in Park Road and dedicated to St Tudwal, a local saint. It was said to have opened on 11th September, the same day the tower fell down on St John's. This was intended to be temporary and fundraising continued to pay for a new permanent church. In 1904 the foundation stone was laid for the St Tudwal Church on King Edward Street. The church was finished and opened in 1905 at a cost of £5,041. It was the first Catholic Church to be built in Meirioneth since the reformation. The church was built with Minffordd granite and Cefn yellow sandstone dressings.



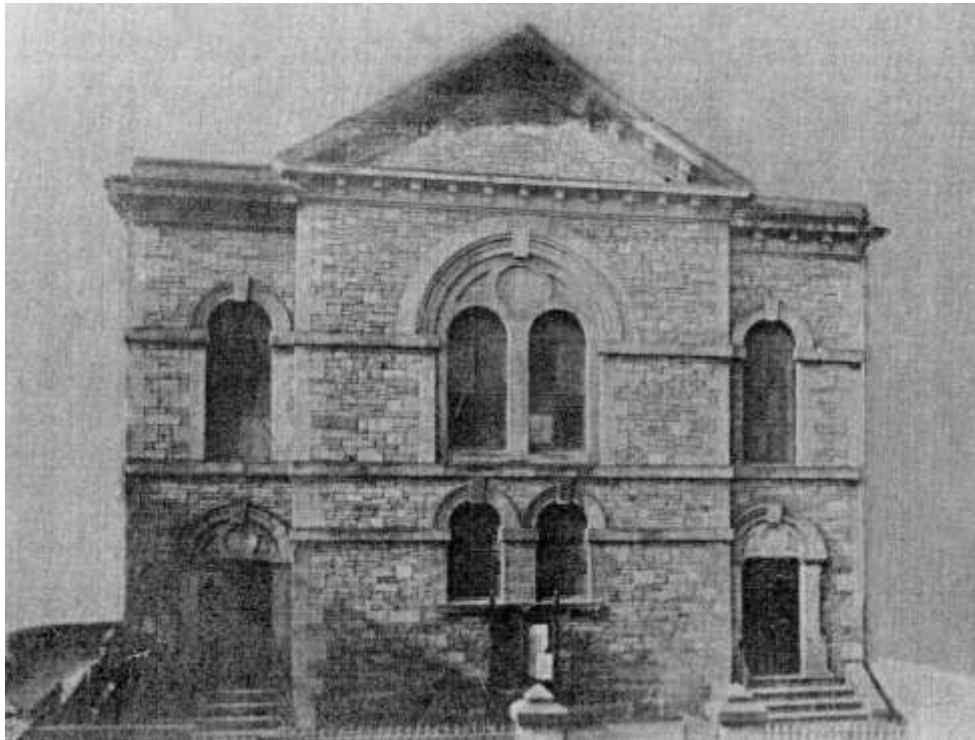
ST. TUDWALS BARMOUTH N. WALES.

It would not be right to discuss churches and religion without mentioning the numerous chapels in and around Barmouth. The chapels provided places of worship for other denominations. Most of these chapels are no longer places of worship and are now used for other purposes, but in their time were important busy sites for the locals to congregate. Walking around Barmouth it is easy to find these chapels.

In 1893 a Methodist chapel was constructed in Park Road. It was rebuilt in 1915 and is now used to store recovery vehicles for a local car dealer/garage.

## Caersalem

In 1825 Caersalem Methodist Chapel was built but then sold to the railway around 1865. A new chapel was built on the high street in 1866 and this was extended in 1911. The chapel is now a high-end furniture and homeware store.



Caersalem 1864



Caersalem 1963

## **Barmouth English Congregational Chapel**

The Barmouth English Congregational Chapel was built around 1897. It has since been converted into the Dragon Theatre on Jubilee Road.



Barmouth English Congregational Chapel 1958

## **Siloam**

In 1828 Siloam Chapel was built in St Anne's Square on Beach Road. It was rebuilt in 1870. It still stands but is now a shop selling beach, camping and novelty goods.



Siloam 1911

## **The Barmouth Zion Baptist Chapel**

The Barmouth Zion Baptist Chapel was built in 1876. It lies between the florist and the Milk Bar in Beach Road, opposite Siloam. Like Siloam it sells beach goods and novelties.

## **Ebenezer Chapel**

The Ebenezer Methodist Chapel was first built in 1806 and then rebuilt in a Gothic style. The interior was renewed, an organ installed, and land purchased for a Sunday School in 1880. It is still in the high street today and runs as a café and shop named Ebenezer's.



Ebenezer Chapel 1881



## **Christ Church**

Christ Church Methodist Chapel was built in 1878 and is formally named Christ Church English Presbyterian and Calvinistic Methodist Chapel. This still serves as a chapel and is on the high street. Until recently it would host Welsh language services for the old congregation of Siloam. The local Girl Guides, Brownies and Rainbows meet in the rooms above the chapel.



Christ Church 1935

## **Capel Parsel**

Capel Parsel was a Calvinistic Methodist chapel built in 1800 and located in Llanaber, not too far from the Cemetery on the Barmouth side. It is now a private house.

## **St Philip's**

St Philip's Church is located just off the road between Barmouth and Bontddu. It is part of the Caerdeon estate and was built by the owner of the estate in 1862 to provide English language worship. This was controversial at the time and caused some trouble with the predominantly Welsh speaking population of the area. The owner was taken to the Court of Arches by the Rector of Llanaber who refused to conduct services in English. The Rector won his case as the law was to conduct Welsh services in Welsh speaking areas. As a result the Bishop of Bangor introduced a bill in the House Of Lords, legalising English services in Welsh speaking areas. This led to the English Services in Wales Act 1863. The church was not consecrated until

1875. It was licensed as a private chapel for the use of the owner of Caerdeon Estate who allowed the Oxford undergraduates that would come to stay on the estate to use it.



St Philip 1863

### **The Moriah Calvinistic Methodist Chapel**

The Moriah Calvinistic Methodist Chapel at Caegwian is located in the hills just outside Barmouth and was built in 1865. It would have served the farmers in the area and also provided a Sunday School for farmers' children.



Caegwian Sunday School with the Roberts family Cae Tudur and the Williams family Tyddyn y Pandy

## Cutiau

The independent cause (the Free Congregationalists) in Cutiau was founded in the 1770s but the chapel was not built until 1806, known as Capel y Cutiau. There were repairs in 1866 and renovations in 1912. Many farming families in the area and inhabitants of Cutiau would worship there. It is located above Glandŵr Mill in the hamlet of Cutiau and is now a private home. Services were still being conducted there until 1995 with the Williams (Tyddyn y Pandy) family predominantly taking care of the chapel and attending the services.



Cutiau 1913