

Rhosneigr Pre-Horeb

At the turn of the twentieth century, this Anglesey village was predominantly Welsh. There was no Railway Station, for the London and North Western Railway did not open a station until 1907. There was no town clock until 1921, when it was erected to remember those who fell in the Great War of 1914-18. The land opposite the site of the Chapel was void of any building. The well-known Premier Garage (demolished in 2009 to make way for Apartments) did not appear on that plot until 1925. Not even a school was to be found so local children were educated in what is now Llanfaelog's Community Centre. It was not until 1908 that a school was established within Rhosneigr itself.

As far as religion was concerned, the established church did not have a presence in the village itself until 1913. Anglican worshippers would walk to '*St. Maelog*', the Parish Church in Llanfaelog. '*Christ Church*' was to be the Anglican place of worship in Rhosneigr, but not until they had taken ownership of the building from the locals. It was originally built in 1908 but was intended to be used as a village hall.

The Non-Conformists did have representation locally. '*Paran*', the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel (now known as the Presbyterian Church of Wales), is situated at the lower end of the High Street. It was established in 1827 and for around a quarter of a century it was the only place of worship within Rhosneigr itself. For the first decade it was functioned as a Sunday School only, a branch from Bryn Du chapel. But the faith of those who established the work there soon saw it grow into a fully-functioning chapel. It is has been suggested that this Sunday School had been in existence from the year 1787 and met in some nearby cottages. A slate plaque above the front door displays the significant years in the chapel's history. The present building, built

in 1887, replaced an earlier chapel on the same site, which gives a strong indication as to its growth through the years.

Towards the end of the 19th century a small chapel called '*Bethania*' was established. It was an Independent Congregational Chapel by denomination. Very little is known of this building and fellowship, and few traces are left in archives or memories. Surviving to this day the build stands nearly opposite the clock tower, but has changed beyond all recognition as a chapel. Over the years it has been used as a garage, a doctor's surgery, a shop, a salon and latterly accommodation.

'*Rehoboth*' is a small Independent Congregationalist Chapel situated on the other side of Maelog Lake in Llanfaelog. This small chapel building was surrounded by just a handful of homes. It was, and is, the only non-conformist representation in Llanfaelog, but would draw its congregation from Rhosneigr also (and more so after the closure of '*Bethania*'). '*Rehoboth*' Chapel dates back to 1837 and remains open although in recent years the small annexed chapel house has been demolished.

In 1898 the Baptists who had been meeting together for some three years, had '*Penuel*' Chapel built. This stood on Maelog Road, just 150 yards from where '*Horeb*' is today. It was small in comparison to its contemporary Baptist Chapels on Anglesey. At its peak, the membership totalled 35, but in 1961 the Baptist cause came to an end in Rhosneigr. The building was converted into a dwelling, and a flat-roofed extension built which for many years was '*Headlines*' Hair Dressers. Most were unaware of this building's history when it was demolished in the spring of 2010.

Other denominations, such as the Roman Catholics and Evangelicals would not appear until the late 1960's. According to the 2001 Census just 43% of residents are Welsh speakers. This was not so in the 1900's. The village was still in its infancy, and although it was still

emerging as a popular tourist location, Rhosneigr was a typical Anglesey village. The language spoken in the home, street or chapel was Welsh. And so the present Rhosneigr differs greatly to the village that Capel 'Horeb' was born into.

The Time was Right

The time was deemed right for the Wesleyan Methodist movement to establish a church in the increasingly popular village of Rhosneigr. The population was increasing, and more and more visitors were drawn to the charm of the locality. On the 7th July 1903 the decision was made, a Wesleyan Chapel was to be built in Rhosneigr. Those present at that quarterly circuit meeting held in nearby Aberffraw were certain that despite three other chapels locally, a congregation would come together.

The enthusiasm for this venture was such that two weeks later, the newly formed Chapel Committee met for the first time. This meeting convened on the 21st July faced many challenges. Where would the Chapel be built? What size of building was required? Where would the funding come from?

A suitable site was found. Mr. Roddick owned several properties locally. He and his family lived in 'Penrhos' on Maelog Road. He ran a butchers shop on the corner of the High Street, and was willing to sell some of the adjacent land to the Wesleyans. None of those on the Chapel committee could have foreseen just how prominent a position this would be in future years. Maelog Road is now main A4080, and opposite is the memorial clock which is often referred to as the Village or Town Centre.

A sum of £138 was agreed and paid to Mr. Roddick. The plot was ready, but what of the Chapel? What size and style should this

new build take? There were many chapels springing up across Wales at this period in history. Many of these were substantial buildings with high ceilings and galleries. A proposal for a 250 seat Chapel was put forward, but declined because of the expected expense for something of that size. A capacity of 200 was settled upon.

Mr. W Lloyd Jones of Bangor was nominated as the Architect for this new venture and was paid the sum of £24.10.0 for his work. Messrs Jones and Williams, also of Bangor, were contracted in as builders. This was not their sole trade as Messrs Jones and Williams were also Undertakers. The contract fee was £830.14.0 paid in instalments to the contractors.

'*Moriah*' Chapel, Glanadda, Bangor had been opened by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1902. Its design was deemed suitable for Rhosneigr, although a larger, slightly modified design would be necessary. '*Moriah*' chapel is now closed and has since been converted into a hair salon. However, even now as you pass the chapel on the Caernarfon Road into Bangor the similarities are still very noticeable.

As the mountain that was to be known as '*Horeb*' rose from the ground the committee continued to meet and discuss the progress and plan the grand opening. One of the problems the committee faced was finance. Already the bills were mounting up. The North Wales District Chapel Committee promised £150 towards the project, and a further grant of £300 came from the Twentieth Century Fund. This fund was exclusively towards Wesleyan Methodist interests in education, overseas missionary work and the building and maintaining of chapels. The latter qualified the Rhosneigr venture to receive this generous gift.

Income was raised by the Holyhead Circuit (to which Rhosneigr was to belong), the helpful sum of £132.15.0 being added to the accounts. Locally funds raised in aid of the new Chapel amounted to

£169.13.8 and were gratefully received. Yet, as the Trustees were to find, 'Horeb' was never going to have a rich congregation. Prior to its opening loans were given to Chapel funds - these would value anything up to £100. Donors would receive an I.O.U signed by the Trustees promising to pay the lender back with three months notice plus interest at the rate of £3.10.0 per cent, per annum. This practice continued for several years after the opening proving to be an effective way of helping the accounts.

On the 12th July 1904 a special service was held outside the Chapel to unveil the memorial stones set into the main structure. This service was led by Reverend Garrett Roberts, a Trustee who was to become the first minister of the Chapel. The guest preacher was the Reverend Rowland Rowlands (*Supervisor of the 'Cylchdaith' – Circuit*) The engravings on the sandstone memorials read: '*J.O. Williams, Gwylfa, Llangedfni. Richard Pritchard, Cogwrn and Miss. Pritchard, Cogwrn. All faithful Wesleyans*'. Following the unveiling there was a hearty tea for all present. The Chapel funds also had a welcome boost as a result of that gathering.

Once the Chapel was built, it had to be furnished. Pews were installed, linoleum and mats laid, blinds hung. Lamps were purchased and installed. A clock was bought, mounted on the wall and a harmonium delivered. This cost £17.10.0 paid for with money especially saved for this purpose. An appeal was made for a pulpit Bible. An English Bible was donated by Mrs. Hughes of '*Cae Crin*' at the opening ceremony. The chapel was now taking shape. The boundary walls at the front of the Chapel were built and railings added. The finishing touch was a painted signboard erected beside the porch.

Minutes from the Committee meetings reveal that prior to its opening, the building was always referred to as the 'Chapel' or 'Rhosneigr Wesleyan Chapel'. The reason behind this was that for most of the planning stage the chapel had no name. It was not until

the committee meeting of 12th July that the biblical name of '*Horeb*' was decided upon. This was just a matter of weeks before the official opening services. One of the last jobs of the builders was to mould the words '*Horeb Wesleyaid*' (*Horeb Wesleyan*) above the front door. The chapel was finished.

It was time to mark the completion and open the doors of the Chapel for the congregation to assemble and worship. This occasion was marked by special opening services held on Sunday 7th and Monday 8th August 1904.

The Sunday began with prayer at 10am. An English service followed at 11am when the speaker was Rev. Peter Jones Roberts (*Secretary of the North Wales Second District*). He addressed a congregation of 50. Rev. Garrett Roberts preached at 2pm to a much fuller chapel. At 6pm the two speakers joined together in the pulpit and preached to a full house. At the close of proceedings 4 new members had been added to the flock.

Monday's services were taken by the Rev. Richard Morgan and Dr. Hugh Jones of Bangor. These guest speakers preached rousing sermons that were well received and delivered with great power. As a result of the Monday gatherings, 2 further members joined the congregation.

According to a report in the '*Holyhead and Anglesey Mail*' published on the 12th August, the Monday evening congregation was so large that there was insufficient space and so it was found necessary to hold the service in the open air. How ironic, considering these gatherings were to mark the opening of the chapel!

Looking at the date above the front door many would assume that the chapel's opening in 1904 was to do with the Welsh Revival of that same year. '*Horeb*' was designed and built prior to the revival taking hold in Wales from the September onwards. Sadly, despite great momentum across the principality there was very little evidence

of effects in Rhosneigr. The chapel that could seat 200 was now open, with just over 30 members on its books, but as the memorial stones testify these were 'faithful Wesleyans'.

The Biblical Mountain

Many chapels in Wales were given biblical names. '*Paran*' is named after the Biblical wilderness where God's people the Israelites wandered for 40 years before entering the promised land. '*Rehoboth*' ('*Rehoboth by the river*') another place mentioned in the Bible was where King Saul, the first King of Israel, was born. '*Penuel*' (or *Peniel*) is another popular name for Chapels in Wales. The area was named by Jacob as the place where he wrestled with God. It is therefore not surprising that the Trustees opted for a Biblical name for this chapel.

The name '*Horeb*' appears several times in the Bible. It was the setting for some major events. It is commonly thought that '*Horeb*' is another name for '*Sinai*', and biblical references seem to back this up. It is a mountain, but not just any mountain. It is referred to as '*the Mountain of God*'.

After fleeing Egypt, Moses settled in Midian, there he married Zipporah and worked as a shepherd for his Father in law Jethro (Reuel). His exile was due to the fact that he had witnessed a Hebrew slave being harshly treated by an Egyptian slave-master, and fuelled with anger he killed the Egyptian responsible. The next day, two Hebrew slaves were arguing, Moses tried to intervene but was horrified when one said '*Do you intend to kill me as you did the Egyptian?*' Little did Moses realise what was in store for him at Midian.

Whilst tending Jethro's flocks at '*Horeb*' he noticed a burning bush. What was unusual was that the bush did not burn up. Intrigued by this spectacle Moses watched. It was then that God spoke to him from within the flames. '*Moses, Moses!*'. He responded straight away

'Here I am'. His sandals were removed, for the place on which he stood was holy. The Lord then revealed His plan and purpose for Moses. God had heard the cry of his oppressed people in slavery. Moses who was to be their leader, was sent to Pharaoh and demanded their release, for God was going to lead them to their own land, the promised land.

Pharaoh's heart was hardened. He was not going to let his workforce leave. Through Moses God was going to show His power. Ten plagues descended upon Egypt, the worst being the last - the death of every first born. The children of Israel were spared this if they followed God's orders. They would have to prepare to leave. Cook a roast meal, and the blood from that animal sprinkled on the lintel and door posts. That night the Angel of Death came, but despite all the losses in Egypt, God had said *'when I see the blood, I will pass over you'*. To those who were obedient, God honoured His pledge. Jews still remember the feast of the Passover to this day.

What a great God of deliverance the people of Israel had. If they needed any further proof of his provision this came at the Red Sea which was parted for them to walk through on dry ground. Their Egyptian pursuers were lost as the sea regained its normal state. Despite God doing all this for them, the Israelites were characterised by their moaning and grumbling against God. When God brought them to the edge of the Promised Land twelve spies entered, ten of whom brought back bad reports. Some even exclaimed that they would have been better off back in Egypt!

As a punishment God caused them to wander around in the wilderness for forty years. Thus the disobedient generation would have died out. Much of these wanderings were around *'Horeb'*. We are told in Exodus 3:1 *'they came unto 'Horeb', the Mountain of God'*. It was here, at *'Sinai'*, that God called Moses up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments. These were God's rules for all

people of all time. They included man's responsibility towards God and towards his fellow-man. As Moses came down the mountain he was horrified to see that the people had so quickly sunk into idolatry and had made, and now worshipped, a golden calf. Moses was enraged, they were doing the very things that God had forbidden. He smashed the two tablets of stone on the ground at '*Horeb*'. But as they are so important they were written again, and are recorded twice in the Bible. During His earthly ministry, Jesus quoted these and expounded them thus showing their significance.

But even Moses was not without fault. The people complained for lack of water. Moses clearly knew God's instruction but standing on Mount '*Horeb*' he defied God and struck the rock with his staff causing water to flow. The Lord had told him to speak to the rock in order for water to be outpoured. Here at '*Horeb*' we see the evidence of what the New Testament records '*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*'.

The problem of sin affects all of mankind. All have broken these perfect rules that were given at Mount Sinai, all deserve the punishment of a holy and just God. Yet, the good news of Calvary's cross is the core of the Christian message. Any preacher stood in a chapel's pulpit, found to be '*rightly dividing the word of truth*', would have explained the Gospel. This word means good news, and explains how there is a Saviour for sinners. The Lord Jesus Christ is His name. He was the only innocent, sin-less one this world has ever known, qualifying Him to bear the punishment for all who would put their faith and trust in Him. The true believer then enjoys peace with God and the assurance of a home in Heaven.

The chapel named after the Biblical mountain '*Horeb*' was to have the message of '*Mount Calvary*' central to its core.

As it was...

The exterior of the Chapel was simple pebble-dash, but decorative mouldings around the windows and corners gave '*Horeb*' its character. These mouldings were sandstone mortar and would have given that distinct colour to her borders. Windows were opaque, but allowed plenty of light into the building.



Walking through the large heavy front door one was met with a large coloured glass window. Either side of this entrance porch were two internal doors that would lead to either aisle through the chapel.

Non-Conformist Chapels were designed to be simple, not as ornate as the established church, but these simple buildings had a beauty of their own. There was much in the way of woodwork which added to the charm of the building. Around every part of the chapel, wood panelling rose to a height of four foot. The pews had their own distinctive shape and were built into the main infrastructure. There

were no doors on these pews, but small brass plaques numbered each one. Large varnished beams held up the ceiling, and made another feature inside.

There was no shortage of light in the chapel. Opaque windows allowed plenty in, with coloured glass borders adding a decorative effect. One unusual mark of the chapel was that one of these windows was internal. Rather than losing the symmetry the window was installed despite being part of the side porch into the School Room. Walls were painted grey, with the plaster etched to imitate large blocks. Half way down the Chapel wall a clock was placed.



At the front of the central pews space was allocated in the design for a harmonium. Therefore two smaller pews either side made full use of space available and kept with the symmetry. In front was the raised platform area with a long panel and lectern forming the Deacon area. The floor of the Chapel sloped to help with visibility and

the acoustics, and this platform helped further by elevating any of the Deacons that would use it.

The Pulpit, an important part of any Chapel from where the Word of God is preached, was much higher. It was, and is, the focal point. There the minister could address the congregation in the certainty that he would be heard. In an age where microphones, speakers and 'loop systems' are a legal requirement, these chapels were designed in such a way that the voice of the preacher would be heard at the back – no escape!



The minister had the most comfortable seat in the place, a padded pew built into the pulpit structure. Light was given by two oil lamps on moveable brass arms bolted either side of the simple pulpit surround. Where some chapels had ornate surrounds this chapel had a very basic white facade which to the more observant revealed many similarities to the exterior mouldings donning the front of the chapel.

To the side was the school room originally built with access from within the chapel or outside. It too had wood panelling and pews that lined the walls. A fire place nestled between the two windows, and a slate lintel hung over the hearth above which another brass arm held an oil lamp. This was a basic chapel building, but with its own unique charm and character.

'Horeb' – Through the Years...

Membership was never high within the Wesleyan cause in Rhosneigr. But the faithful congregation persevered. There were set backs over the years, most notably during World War II. The plaque hanging in the entrance lobby today pays tribute to those who lost their lives. Arthur Price Owen, 24, a Marine who lived in 'Ardwyn' died in 1941. Griffith H Griffiths, 38, of 'Hafod' died whilst serving with the Royal Guards in Italy during 1944.

With a small body of members, finance was always an issue. The loan scheme, introduced to raise the initial capital to build, continued for some time. Occasional prize draws were held with tickets which openly said 'proceeds in aid of the above chapel' and



even 'proceeds to clear the debt of the above chapel'! The top prize at one such draw was a piano. Grand Concerts were sometimes held, where a piano was hired and a 'celebrity' was invited to chair the

proceedings. Two rates of tickets were sold to raise money for chapel funds.

Sir Thomas Bart MP was one such guest. He was originally a Liberal Member of Parliament for Wrexham, but served the constituency of Anglesey from 1923 to 1929. He was made a Baronet of Garreglwyd, Anglesey during 1918. Tickets bearing his name for a Grand Concert in August 1922 would have carried some weight, and justified a cost of either 2s 6d or 1s 6d.

There were other events hosted by the chapel. For example, the chapel was a venue for choirs to come and entertain in song. Locals would act in dramas and plays were performed at 'Horeb'. Even with the constraints of being a small membership (in comparison

to some other chapels of the period), its services and events made 'Horeb' a hive of activity in the community.

At its height the Chapel was as busy as any other chapel locally. On top of the extra events held within, there would be the normal two services each Sunday, plus a Sunday School in the side vestry. Also, mid week, there would be another meeting held in the school room.

At some point in the 1920s or 30s the Chapel received electricity. This meant that electric lights could be used to illuminate inside for the first time. Chains suspending the new lights were suspended from the wooden beams and the central lights benefited from white plaster moulds on the ceiling. It was some time later before heating arrived in the form of 'under-pew radiators'.

After the war years, it is clear to note from the Archives that the Chapel was no longer referred to as the 'Wesleyan Chapel, Rhosneigr' but rather 'Rhosneigr Methodist Church'. This coincides with the Calvinistic Methodist movement in Wales adopting the name 'Presbyterian' ('*Paran*' Chapel being part of that denomination). Whether this was intentional is not clear.

Under the name 'Rhosneigr Methodist Church' the Trustees submitted a planning application in 1949 to extend the School Room. There was plenty of space adjacent to the Chapel, land which belonged to '*Horeb*'. The application form clearly states that the plea of the members was '*we need a new School Room*'. Evidently the mid-week meetings had grown in number. The form gave this reason behind the request '*[the current School Room] is too small at present for meetings on week nights*'. It was never built. The plans were stamped by the Methodist Church Department for Repairs, but it is not clear whether the authorities rejected it or a lack of funds prevented it from being built.

There were obviously joyful times in the chapel where members and visitors enjoyed special meetings for Harvest and

Christmas. Gold-rimmed tea-service and crockery, inscribed with the chapel's name, hark back to the chapel's hey day. Two ornate wooded chairs with '*Horeb*' carved into them bear testimony of happy days.

As the years rolled by, in common with many other Welsh chapels, the congregation dwindled. A minister could not be justified to be based exclusively at Rhosneigr, and so the circuit preachers took it in turn to fill the pulpit. The later circuit rotas show that fewer and fewer meetings were held at Rhosneigr, shrinking to one a week by the early 1980s and sometimes even less frequent than that. Despite being a popular tourist resort, sometimes there were no services at all during the month of August. This was not the vision of those '*faithful Wesleyans*' who had been dedicated to bringing the movement to Rhosneigr.

The year 1986 arrived and the Trustees and the Holyhead circuit decided it was time to close the doors for one last time and sell the building. The chapel closed quietly with no widely publicised services to mark the end of an era. '*Horeb*' Chapel was now closed. The end – or was it?

Meanwhile...

Following the closure of Holyhead's Cambria Street Gospel Hall in the early to mid 1970's, a few believers decided to regroup and meet in a home at Rhosneigr. The home was a new building known as 'White Gables'. Each Lord's Day morning the Christians would remember the Lord Jesus and His death in the breaking of bread and taking of the cup (in a similar manner to that practised by the Christian Brethren). This proved to be the making of Rhosneigr Christian Fellowship. Other believers warmed by the simplicity of 'New Testament principles' joined them and the house-church grew.

But communion was not enough. Christians need to be fed on the Word of God, and so weekly Bible Studies were held. These were greatly valued for their wholesome study of the Bible. Believers from outside of the fellowship often joined to hear the scriptures expounded. For a number of years a group from the Methodists in Holyhead would travel to Rhosneigr and benefit from the ministry on a weekday evening.

These Christians were never 'insular', and many came from Brethren and Evangelical backgrounds where communicating the Christian message to others was a fundamental part of a Christian's life. Amongst other forms of outreach, the Children's work flourished. A Sunday School had been established for those within the fellowship and was also open to non-church families. The local primary school hall was hired for a weekly club which in later years became known as the 'six-five special' (a name coined from a Saturday evening magazine television programme).

Prayer was a vital part of the fellowship, and became an integral part of Rhosneigr Christian Fellowship. Missionaries visiting the area would often be invited to give a report on their work, and then they were prayed for. Financial donations were also made from the fellowship to help further the work of the Gospel in distant lands.

Despite meeting in the home of Mr. & Mrs. Bonnet, the services were open to all. Summer months would often bring in holiday makers, so sometimes space would be at a premium. Extra chairs stored in a neighbour's shed would have to be carried in for each meeting.

In 1979 the Bonnett family sold White Gables and moved just a few yards away to Moorcroft. This property was much larger, built with stone sourced locally in the lakeside quarry. The Bonnet family occupied the top floors, whilst the ground floor and basement were given over for the exclusive use of Rhosneigr Christian Fellowship.

Donations from the fellowship funds, members and friends helped to adapt the space into a functioning church building. Health and Safety stipulated that fire alarms and extinguishers be installed and a fire-proof ceiling erected. The building was registered as a place of worship and became known as 'Moorcroft Christian Centre'. 'Moorcroft' is one of the prominent landmarks as you enter Rhosneigr over the 'common' (The common land between Maelog Lake and the sand dunes). After the straightening of the main A4080 in the late 1960s, the council effectively created a car park which would be ideal for the centre. Facilities at 'Moorcroft Christian Centre' included a meeting room, Sunday School rooms, a kitchen, toilets and a large basement.

An impact was being made on the community. The children's work prospered, the preaching of the Gospel continued, Newspapers and Christian leaflets were distributed locally and God blessed the work. Audio-visual presentations such as the 'Jesus Film' were great tools in sharing the Christian faith with others. In July 1984 a coach was taken to the famous Billy Graham Crusade at Liverpool with many non-Christians accepting the invitation to attend.

The fruit of the labours was seen in the increasing number at the fellowship. People were becoming Christians, and in consistency with scripture were baptised. But Moorcroft Christian Centre was not equipped with a baptistry where professing Christians could be immersed in water as an outward sign of the change in their lives. Therefore, baptisms in the sea became the norm at Rhosneigr Christian Fellowship. There were many who after putting their faith and trust in the Saviour made the short walk to either Broad Beach or the Front Beach to be baptised. These events were often witnessed by many curious people who were confronted with the message of the Gospel.

Being close to RAF Valley, and with Officers' accommodation in Rhosneigr itself, the fellowship was often swelled with Christians

posted in the station. Bringing different gifts and talents these proved to be a great blessing to the church. Many lasting friendships were forged during their time stationed at Valley. Yet sadly, as with the nature of the armed forces, posting often prized such away after just two to three years.

There were also the 'social' events where members of the church could get together and enjoy each others company. These ranged from meals to walks. Many of these walks were organised to enjoy God's creation. Walks around locations such as South Stack Lighthouse were popular. These were open to Christians from within the church and from other similar churches to walk and enjoy fellowship. These times together were often memorable and were a great bridge-building exercise so that people could get to know each other properly.

By the early 1980's the Sunday School, Children's Club and Youth Club were drawing young people from all over the locality. A mini-bus was used to collect some of these youngsters and sometimes it would be necessary to make extra journeys to accommodate everyone. There are many locally who have fond memories of their times at 'Moorcroft', especially the youth clubs in the cellar. The Sunday School was divided into age-appropriate classes and good attendance was rewarded with a trip to venues like 'Butlins' at Pwllheli and the 'Joys of Life' country park at Bethesda. A highlight of the year was the Sunday School Picnic. All would meet at 'Moorcroft' on a summer's Saturday and walk down to the 'common'. In a wide open space not far from the Maelog Lake Hotel, there would be many games and activities. The game 'Coastguards and Smugglers' in the sand dunes was always a favourite. This would be followed by refreshments and an epilogue.

During the 1920s and 30s the first beach missions in Rhosneigr were held. These were run by the C.S.S.M (Children's Special Service

Mission), and would see a couple of hundred adults and children gathering on the sands in front of 'Beach Terrace'. But these sorts of mission would then lay dormant for many years. 'Moorcroft' would restart the work. The GLO Team (Gospel Literature Outreach) who had been a huge help to the fellowship over the years ran a beach mission in 1986. When in 1987 the team could not come, The Open-Air Mission was invited to bring a team and run a beach mission on the Front Beach. Basically this was an open-air Sunday School or Children's Club. There would be games, competitions, chorus singing, a memory verse to learn, a story and a quiz. These were run annually during the

summer holidays with both morning and afternoon sessions. It was nick-named 'Sunshine Centre' with its own theme chorus. Other activities in the week often included a treasure hunt and a beach barbeque. These would always be followed by a short Christian message.



At the end of the week there would be the 'Prize Giving' to which families who had attended the beach mission would be invited. In the early years these were always well attended. One memory that sticks in many a mind is during a prize giving when the epilogue was being given. The beach mission leader had just explained the Christian message and was using an illustration of endurance with a runner racing towards the finishing line. The message alone sticks in many minds, but as the message was given a man who regularly attended the beach mission with his family chalked a picture of this. It was a striking depiction and was awarded as one of the top prizes.

As Rhosneigr was a popular holiday resort, many Christian holiday makers would want to have fellowship with the church. Summer Sundays were often packed out at 'Moorcroft Christian Centre'. During some services and meetings there was standing room only, and it was common place for people to be seated down the corridor. So much so that during the weekly notices, church members would be asked to hold back from attending the evening service to allow space for visitors. This could not go on!

As the Wesleyan Methodists would cease services during the month of August it was muted that we should seek to hire 'Horeb Chapel' for summer use. Permission was granted. But under the agreement, communion was not to be held at the chapel. Most August Sundays of the early 1980s therefore, comprised of a Breaking of Bread service at 'Moorcroft', followed by a family service at 'Horeb Chapel'. In the evening, the Gospel Service at 6:00pm would see a congregation of ninety to a hundred. Following this, at about 7:30pm an open-air meeting around the town memorial clock was held. As the Christians sang and preached short, but clear messages, locals and visitors milling around would stop to listen. These were often followed up with Christian leaflets and a conversation.

Even outside of the season Rhosneigr Christian Fellowship would regularly hire the use of the chapel. Special meetings, family services, film shows were put on to a much larger congregation than could be accommodated up the road at 'Moorcroft'.

'...and they came unto Horeb'

In 1986 the Wesleyan cause at 'Horeb Chapel' came to an end. As a closed chapel it would no longer be kept in 'working condition', and therefore the summer rental of the chapel was in doubt. The estate agents came round, photographed the chapel, now suffering

from neglect, and it was put on the market. The asking price in 1986 was around £21,000. There were rumours of a developer acquiring this prime land in the centre of Rhosneigr, and also rumours of it being turned into a garage show room.

This same chapel that was built through the faith, vision and determination of a few Christians was now closed. Sadly, this was the plight of many chapels in the 1980s. Chapels which were once filled with the resounding praise of God through song and the preaching of God's Word were a dying entity. Chapels were no longer the hub of the community. Society as a whole had moved on, leaving God behind.

Amidst this gloom, there was hope. At a church business meeting on 21st May 1986, a motion was put forward to make an offer on the redundant chapel. The proposal was seconded and agreed by all. This was a great act of faith, and prayer for guidance was essential. Church accounts show that there was only £575 in the building fund. A further £20,000 was estimated to be needed for repairs and alterations. How would the Church afford such a venture?

It was clear that this was all of God, and through much prayer and sacrificial giving of the fellowship and friends, the money was available. Following the informal interest shown, a formal offer was made to the Methodist Circuit and accepted on the 1st June 1987. Completion of the sale was on 14th October 1987. A board of Trustees had been established and a legal deed ratified. Including solicitor fees the final sum paid for the building was £23,930. The fellowship now had a new home in the centre of Rhosneigr. In the words already quoted of Exodus 3:1, the church now *'came unto 'Horeb', the Mountain of God'*.

It was sad however that one of the remaining trustees of 'Horeb', the Wesleyan Chapel faced opposition locally. This was because it was deemed by some that the chapel had been sold to the

‘English’. It is to be said that these negative remarks came from a minority, and many locally loved the prospect of the chapel being kept open – whether the services were held in Welsh or in English. The said former Trustee became a faithful member of the church now occupying the chapel.

At one of the special business meetings held at the building, it was noted that the Chapel in its current condition and layout would not suit the needs of the church. It was just too large! Alternations were necessary and so a list was drawn up of the provisions which were required to meet the needs of the Church:

- a) Sunday Meetings.
- b) Special Meetings with large numbers.
- c) Youth and Children’s Clubs.
- d) Sunday School classes.
- e) Small Meetings.
- f) Attractive Entrance.
- g) Toilets and Kitchen.
- h) Informal Activities.
- i) Car Parking spaces.
- k) Low running and maintenance costs.
- l) An additional requirement - a baptistry.

The fellowship was greatly blessed by having amongst their number an architect, those gifted in joinery, electrical work and decorating. This would prove most helpful and would cut costs considerably. Plans were drawn up and applications made to the council. The then-borough council of Anglesey looked favourably on the plans which were passed on the 11th May 1987. As the observant will realise, these plans had been submitted even before the offer had been accepted on the building – such was the confidence of the Church that this was right in the eyes of God. It was now full steam ahead!

During this busy time, at a special meeting held in July 1987, Rhosneigr Christian Fellowship opted for a new name. To suit the nature of their ministry locally, it was decided that 'Rhosneigr Evangelical Church' be more appropriate. The word 'Evangelical' comes from the Greek word '*Euangelion*'. This means the 'Gospel' or the 'Good News' of Jesus Christ, and Evangelicals are those who want to share this message with others. This was the testimony of the believers at 'Moorcroft' and would be at '*Horeb*'. Jesus Christ had changed their lives for the better, forgiven their sin and assured them of a home in Heaven – and they wanted others to know Him!

Working to the criteria in place for the accommodation required, the plans reflected a versatile church building. Inside, the front half of the chapel was to remain very much as it was. Pews would be kept in situ, grey walls would be painted in a lighter neutral colour. Exposed floorboards and faded red runners were replaced with a new carpet throughout. The two windows around the pulpit needed replacing and damp-work carried out in one of the corners. A requirement of Rhosneigr Evangelical Church was its own baptistry – an inside pool where those professing faith could be fully immersed. Therefore, the deacon rail was removed and a baptistry dug. By doing this, a larger open platform was created. A scriptural verse was chosen by the Church to adorn the pulpit surround. These are the words of Jesus recorded in Revelation 1:18 – '*I am He who lives, I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore*'.

However, major changes were to happen in the back half of the chapel. Pews were removed and sold to help generate revenue. These pitch-pine pews were quite sought after with many DIY enthusiasts wanting them for their home projects. In a Penmynydd home there was a panelled airing-cupboard built with '*Horeb*' wood. Somewhere in Llandudno customers at a restaurant were sitting unwittingly on '*Horeb*' pews as they ate.

Internal load-bearing walls were built with strong girders across to hold the weight of the new upper level. Where possible things were re-used and this helped to preserve the character of the chapel. For



example, the two doors that once opened onto the aisles were now united to make a large double door from the larger foyer into the new multi-versatile room. A staircase was added and the upper floor would become a large Sunday school and a youth-club room kitted out with sofas, a pool table and a table-tennis table.

Downstairs a cloak room was created, with the original back-pew still in situ. An extension was built to accommodate new toilets and a kitchen. The Kitchen would be connected with an internal corridor to the vestry. The vestry (also referred to as the school room) had shrunk in size, owing to space being allocated for another toilet and a kitchen-ette.

Outside, the iron rails and gates were removed and the exterior walls were repaired and pebble-dashed. Part of the wall from the adjacent lane was removed to facilitate a hardcore car park. The roof and barge boards were repaired, lights fitted and pathways laid. The hedge was trimmed back and tidied only to uncover much rubbish and a case of beer! The window to the left of the porch was now obscured by a staircase and so became the ideal position for a church notice board. After 84 years the stone work and pebble-dash was looking tired and dirty. Professional sand-blasters were commissioned to clean up the outside fascia of the building.

Through out the entire project most of the work was undertaken by those associated with the Church fellowship. There was

work for all to do. Even the ladies were hard involved, not only in making cushions, and coverings but in painting too. The chapel was used during the renovations for special meetings and by the 'Building Committee' which had been established to oversee the project. Of course in any work of this nature there would be problems and mishaps. For example, there were the two instances of a child and then an adult who managed to put their feet through the newly plastered ceiling!

It took just under a year to complete the renovations. Throughout this period of hard work, the Church functioned as normal using Moorcroft Christian Centre as its base. The Church was faithful in prayer as they sought the Lord to aid them in this undertaking. Towards the end of the refurbishment, prayer meetings were being held in the chapel. As the completion was in sight a 'theatrette' organ worth £4,000 was purchased for just £700 and a new pulpit Bible donated by a local 'Gideon'. An army of volunteers scrubbed down all the wooden chairs from 'Moorcroft' ready for their new positioning. A van was hired and packed with furniture, cups and saucers, hymn books and bibles to equip the new home. The chapel was re-registered as a place of worship and by mid-September 1988 Rhosneigr Evangelical Church was ready to open the doors of the chapel.

The last Sunday services were held at 'Moorcroft Christian Centre' on 18th September, with the Chapel opening service arranged for the following weekend. Invitations to the special 're-opening' of 'Horeb' Chapel were printed in the style of many Horeb's tickets and invites of its early years. It was to be an afternoon service with refreshments afterwards. It was a time to thank God for His faithfulness to the Church and to commit the work and service of Rhosneigr Evangelical Church to Him for the future in their new base. There were many non-Christians present and so it proved a great opportunity for the invited speaker, Mr. Ivan Malyon (a missionary

supported by the Church), to preach the Gospel to a packed house. Pews in the Chapel area were full and chairs in the new long room were also occupied. The dividing partitions between the long room and the chapel area were not open – they had not yet been hung! Other slight problems involved the late arrival of the new chapel lights and so Moorcroft’s paper lanterns had a use as shades in the mean time!

1988 Onwards

There were times of blessing and encouragements following the move. The Church under God’s grace prospered. The Church continued to support missionaries and sought to introduce others to the Christian faith. Over a three month period in early 1989 Bibles were posted (unobtrusively) to Russia – at that time the then-Soviet Union were suppressing many Christian efforts. This was just one of the ways in which the church felt they could help to spread God’s Word.

During the early years of worshipping at ‘Horeb’ the core nucleus of the Church was growing. People were being converted – becoming Christians. This was evident on the 25th February 1990 when the Baptismal pool was used for the first time. Four Christians testified that they had come to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and passed through the waters of baptism to show this publicly.

A typical Sunday consisted of Morning Worship (with the Breaking of Bread) followed by the Sunday School spread in classes around the building. The work amongst the children grew, and at one time the “Sunday Seekers” (Sunday School) needed 4 classes plus a Bible Class for teenagers. Two of the pupils who attended for a short while were the great grandchildren of Mr. Roddick - who had sold the

plot of land to Wesleyans way back in 1903. The evening Gospel service would start with the opportunity to sing and learn new choruses and hymns accompanied by the organ and piano. The service would then be taken by a visiting speaker. A time for fellowship followed over a cup of tea in the long room. In those days the duo assigned by rota to make the tea would slip out of the main chapel area during the last hymn to prepare the refreshments in the kitchen. It was a responsible job – the water boiler didn't have a 'switch off' function and it's built in harmonica would sound when it was at boiling point – it was a race to turn this off before it sounded out during the silence of the closing prayer!

Monday evenings were given over to Young Peoples' work. Those of primary age came to the Children's Club at 6:00pm. The singing was accompanied by guitar, Bible stories were told with the use of flannel graph visual aids and an imaginative quiz tested how well the boys and girls had been listening. This was followed at 7:30pm by the 11+ Youth Club. These could play board games, early computer games downstairs, and upstairs pool and table tennis. A short epilogue would round off the evening in the upstairs lounge area.

Tuesdays evening were for the Young Christians of the Church. Originally started at 'Moorcroft' as a nurture group for new Christians, it developed into the Young Peoples' Bible Study (YPBS). This would be held in the side room (Vestry) sat with open bibles around a table. The YPBS also organised trips out to Christian concerts and proved to be a great encouragement to all involved.

On Wednesday afternoons the Ladies' met together in the Long Room. Each Wednesday evening was allocated for the Prayer Meeting. Meeting in the vestry, seated at the round table, the Church would pray for those who were unwell, facing difficult times, and those who weren't Christians. The work of the Church was brought before God's throne of Grace in prayer seeking His continual guidance and blessing.

The Church also had a 'Prayer Secretary' who would read through all the correspondence received from Missionaries and provide items for prayer at the meeting. Bible Studies were held in the same room each Thursday evening with Bibles open and a passage read, explained and discussed. Questions were welcomed and beneficial discussions took place.

Fridays and Saturdays were generally quiet days in the life of the Church and so this proved the best time for cleaning, organ practice, visitation and the meeting of the Oversight (The Elders who oversaw the work of the Church).

Senior Citizens' Suppers had been started at 'Moorcroft' and now continued bi-annually at 'Horeb'. Ladies' from the Church would lay on a meal for local pensioners. Following the meal favourite hymns would be sung. There would be those to give testimony – telling how they had become Christians. Appropriate poetry would be read and a short epilogue would conclude the evening. For many years seated at



the piano at such gatherings was the Rhosneigr resident, Joe Graham. Playing on the stage for the likes of Gracie Fields was no match for aiding the singing of the old favourites such as 'Cwm Rhondda' and 'Blaenwern'.

As the last chapel caretaker for the Methodists and a trustee for twenty years, Richard Owen ("Dick Marine") knew the building inside-out. He had been brought up in the chapel with some of his family serving as deacons through the years. During the alterations he would often appear at the door, looking with interest. Post-renovations, Richard, who frequently attended special services, would

often give his approval to the new 'Horeb' – both the activities held there and the sympathy and care shown in respect of the building.

Those who were unable to attend any of the services and activities of Rhosneigr Evangelical Church were not neglected. Visitation was important to the Church leadership. Several would spend their time making contact with older people locally, showing care and concern. In several of the local Residential Homes services were held. In some of these homes there was a nucleus of Christians and some Bible Studies were held for their benefit.

It is important to note that a Church is not a building, it is the body of Christians. This body is made up of imperfect people. Therefore it is necessary to be open and state that even amongst so much blessing and encouragement there were difficulties. From time to time there were disagreements amongst members sometimes resulting in a move to a different Church. This book is not intended to give a false impression of the fellowship, there were heartaches along the way. What is abundantly clear is that despite problems the Church continues. The glory of that does not go to mere men but to God. The very fact that the Church exists in its own premises is solely down to the grace of God. As the Psalmist wrote '*This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes*' (Psalm 118:23).

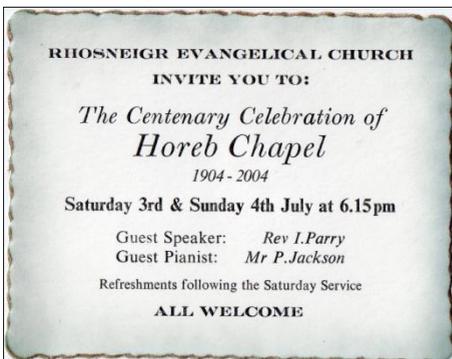
The Church can also be described as a family. It is a family made up of *real* people! Through faith and trust in Jesus Christ believers have been adopted into God's family. But as with any earthly family there are highs and there are lows. This book has charted many of the 'highs' in the history of both church and chapel, but there are also those 'lows'. It is with great sadness that faithful workers deteriorate in health and pass away. The Church mourns the loss of some great influential characters through whom she has been blessed, but the Bible assures us that they are with Christ, which is far better

In 2004 a new roof was necessary. No Lottery grants were sought, but the church family and friends dug deep and the money was available. During this period of expensive work being carried out it is testimony to the generosity of the Lord's people that the Church Missionary giving did not drop. Felt and batons were installed and much of the original slates reused.



During that year it was decided to mark the centenary of the Chapel. Not that the church could claim ownership for this long, but here was a chapel that had gone against the grain. Another Evangelical Church in North Wales had acquired an abandoned chapel in similar circumstances and a newspaper article announced 'Chapel is Born Again!' 'Horeb' Chapel had been 're-born', but a hundred years later was still doing what it was designed to do – be a place of worship and a centre for the Gospel. A ten foot long fabric banner was made and hung across the front of the chapel – "100 years with Jesus – Praise the Lord".

Over the weekend of 3rd and 4th July 2004 special anniversary services were organised. Invitations were printed in the traditional 'Horeb' style. Peter Jackson, the blind pianist from Ammanford was



invited to come and play and give his testimony. Partitions were opened, floral displays decorated the chapel. A commemorative cake was cut during the refreshments and served on the original 'Horeb' china. The Saturday meeting was chaired by a

founding member of Rhosneigr Evangelical Church. The Rev. Irvon Parry, from the Independent Evangelical Church in Llandudno, addressed the large congregation on both occasions with a Gospel message – ‘There’s life for a look at the Crucified One’. The hymn penned by Timothy Dudley-Smith became the anthem of the weekend:

*Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord for the years, we bring our thanks today*

So the years roll by. People come and go, times change but the Church carries on. The needs, but not the doctrines, of the church also change. It was necessary to amalgamate some meetings, and focus on different forms of outreach. For example the fabric of the chapel also needed to be adapted for modern use. In 1997 provision was made upstairs for a reference library and study area to assist in sermon preparation. A Church website was created in 2003 to promote the Church activities and give information about the beliefs and practices of the Church – a far cry from methods in use when the chapel was opened!

In 2009 it was necessary to cater for young children within the church, and so a crèche was established upstairs during the morning service, with the audio relayed to those supervising. The Ladies’ Meeting was also reconvened that year under the new name of the ‘Ladies’ Hour’. This informal meeting gathers monthly in the upstairs lounge, making use of the area once allocated for the Youth Club.

When the mid-week meetings began meeting in the ‘Long Room’, the Vestry became a storage room for aid to be sent to Eastern European Orphanages. This work in conjunction with the Christian charity Blythswood also includes fund-raising when the car park is used

for stalls to generate revenue – not for church funds but to buy much needed supplies to send out to the under privileged abroad.

After several years of questioning, a decision was made in 2009 to give the 105 year old chapel a face lift. The existing pebble-dash was bare in some parts and exposed rendering severely discoloured. Another sand-blasting session (as carried out in 1988) was not an option. So in early 2010 lime-mortar and pebble-dash was added and fascias painted. Instantly the building was being noticed! Many people pass chapels which never seem to change, but suddenly heads were turning. Drivers were slowing as they drove past to see what was happening to 'Horeb'.



It was the talk of the town with many encouraging remarks given. The result of the major works was that the chapel was now much brighter and pleasing to the eye. Capitalising on this another notice board was erected so that verses of scripture could be displayed!

Other developments to improve the general appearance outside included the removal of sandy lawns and a tired flower bed, replaced with a low-maintenance, versatile area.

In common with many Churches, (and sadly reflecting the general apathy of our nation) the Sunday School numbers dwindled and is now temporarily closed. The Children's meetings that once attracted so many in the past have also declined. However, in a society where parents seem disinterested or motivated to send their children along to a club or Sunday School, visits are now made by representatives from the Church to local schools, taking assemblies on

a regular basis. The annual Bible Exhibition (run in conjunction with the Open-Air Mission) is taken into these same schools. With the use of visual aids, props and costumes, Bible stories are taught and explained. These are seen by hundreds of children each year. Also, there have been class visits to the chapel in recent years. A school group is given a tour of the building and this proves to be a great opportunity to explain what and why things are done in that way at 'Horeb'.

Now in the 21st Century, the work of Rhosneigr Evangelical Church continues at 'Horeb' Chapel. Regular activities are as follows:

Sunday

10:15am

Morning Worship & Breaking of Bread

Remembering the death of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, and what that means to the Christian.

This is followed by consecutive Bible Teaching.

Meanwhile a crèche is held in the upstairs lounge.

At the close of the meeting a collection is taken for the work of the Church and support of our Missionary friends and societies.

6:00pm

Gospel Service

Hymn singing, a Bible reading then a message is preached explaining the Good News of the Gospel.

Refreshments served at the close of the Service.

Monday

6:00pm

Children's Club

Held during the school terms for primary aged children

Tuesday

7:00pm

1st Tuesday of Month – Prayer Meeting

A time to focus on the needs of the Church and its members, followed by a prayer time for Missionary interests

2nd, 3rd & 4th Tuesdays of Month – Bible Study & Prayer

Consecutive ministry from God's Word followed by an open Prayer Time

Wednesday

2:00pm

1st Wednesday of Month – Ladies' Hour

Informal meeting in the upstairs lounge with an interesting talk followed by an epilogue and refreshments

Other Activities as advertised.

ALL Welcome!

(All services, meetings and activities correct at time of print.)

Conclusion

The compiler of this book has sought to chart the wealth of history embedded in 'Horeb' Chapel. Unlike so many chapels which are now carpet warehouses, luxury apartments etc. the history of this chapel is two-fold. Under the present occupiers the Chapel continues to resound with praises to God and the good news of the Gospel continues to be preached.

Much of a tribute is needed to the many faithful workers who, down through the years, have made possible the encouragements outlined in this book. Who knows? In future, another book may have to be written. As someone once said '*we know not what the future holds, but we know who holds the future!*' But truly the honour, praise

and glory belongs to God and He alone. For without His leading and provision none of this would have been possible. As this chapter closes allow, if you would, one last quote. It is by a founder-member of Rhosneigr Evangelical Church and is taken from a commemorative leaflet given to all at the Re-Opening service in 1988. The words are still true for today.

'The building work is complete, but the spiritual work for God is not. He has placed His church in Rhosneigr to proclaim His great salvation, which only comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a great need today to re-establish in the minds of men and women, boys and girls the truth of the Word of God - the Bible, and to witness to the fact that Jesus did rise from the dead, and is a living bright reality to those who trust and obey Him.

Not only do we have the spirit of 1904, but the Spirit of Truth with whose help the new 'Horeb' will be filled to capacity with those who have found Jesus Christ to be someone real.'