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## Sardis Independent Congregational Chapel

Sardis is an Independent Congregational Chapel on the outskirts of the small village of Abertridwr. When it was first built there was only a few scattered settlements in the area, and it mainly served the spiritual needs of remote and isolated farmsteads.

The only remaining evidence of this is the section of stonework in the boundary wall where a gateway has been filled in. This was the main entrance to the chapel grounds for those travelling from farmsteads in and around the surrounding hillside. Few people came from the low land where the village now lies.



*The central section of stonework marks the gateway through which visitors to the chapel arrived at the building. The village in the distance did not exist and Sardis Chapel sat in an isolated spot.*

Sardis Chapel was built in 1821 by a group of Independent Christians who had previously been meeting at designated meeting houses in the area, the most important of which was a farmhouse known as 'Cynonisa'. The chapel was named after Sardis in the Book of Revelation.



John Jones of Afonfechan and Morris Hughes of the parish of Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa (younger brother of John Hughes of Pontrobert), were prominent members of the preaching circuit who were instrumental in the foundation of Sardis Chapel, (which lies on the edge of the boundary of the parish of Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa). The chapel was opened officially on April 10th and 11th 1822, and this was marked by a series of sermons, including one by Morris Hughes. He remained a faithful minister of the chapel until his death in 1846

## The chapel today

Little remains of the 1821 building. In 1902 it was almost completely demolished and rebuilt in red brick and only the stone wall on the field side survives from the earlier building. The rebuilding of the chapel was carried out by Morgan Harries of Dolanog. The new chapel was opened at Easter 1903. A date stone above the main entrance marks both the original building and its restoration.

By now the membership was drawn from the upland area of Boncyn Celyn, which retains most Welsh-speaking families. In its heyday, the village population supported the chapel and provided many children for the Sunday school and the Band of Hope youth club. Organised cultural events took place in conjunction with Bethel Methodist Chapel (now closed), Saron (Independent Congregational) and Bethania (MC) in the Conwy valley. Sardis Chapel also has its own Plygain Party at the start of each year, which visits the Plygain Services (a form of carol service) in the surrounding churches and chapels.



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### Interior

The interior is typical of the fittings associated with Independent Chapels. The emphasis is on the pulpit as preaching was central to the service.



The pews are simple in design, in neat rows with two aisles and there is a strong sense of symmetry and order. An interesting feature is the numbers attached to the sides of each pew, all of which survive in their original positions. The congregation would each pay towards a pew, which contributed to the salary of the minister and upkeep of the building. In turn they had the right to sit in this pew. Today's congregation can remember a time when new comers to the village of Abertridwr were on a waiting list for a pew and the chapel was full for Sunday worship. Portable pews, now stored in the adjoining schoolroom, had to be brought in.



Attached to the east end of the chapel are two domestic buildings. The stone end house, known as the manse, dates from at least 1891, as it is referred to in the census of that year.

The room between the house and the chapel room that is now the Sunday schoolroom, was once a single storey shelter used as stabling for horses bringing their riders to chapel. At the time of the 1902 building project, this was turned into the present internal room and a second storey added as part of the domestic house.

### The village

The village of Abertridwr has grown up west of Sardis Chapel since the 1920s, when the Liverpool Corporation extended the housing for the workers at the Vyrnwy dam at Llanwddyn. The village grew with a second phase of building in the 1930s and a third in the 1950s, which included the building of the Community Centre and school.

Further information on Sardis Chapel can be found in the Montgomeryshire Collections (Volume 7) and Thomas Rees & John Thomas' 4 volume (published 1871+) History of the Welsh Independent Churches, Montgomeryshire section.