

A BRIEF HISTORY

A brief history of Oswald Road Chapel, Prebysterian Church of Wales

'Presbyterianism first took root in Oswestry in the year 1810 ... by the formation of a church which met in various homes, notably the house of one, Susannah Evans.', worshipping in Welsh. [1] The first chapel in Oswestry, for what was then known as Calvinistic Methodism, was opened in Castle Street in 1813, where the Church flourished and from which she moved in 1837 to a new site in Park Avenue, where the present Zion - Welsh speaking Presbyterian Church - is now based.

In 1864-6 the railway - finally - made its way to Oswestry, bringing people who needed housing, and who were accomodated in new streets, one of which was Oswald Road. In response to this Zion Church decided to build a mission church, near the station for the new residents, on Albert Road. This led to a flourishing fellowship which, in the 1880's bought land in Oswald Road for a new chapel to replace thier Albert Road home. In June 1889 the Church moved in one procession from Albert Road to Oswald Road, with frist service at Oswald Road on Sunday, June the 30th. [Albert Road continued as a mission centre under the PCW's Home Mission and was later cared for by the Forward Movement, however the Church did survive in the long run and the cause was closed, with many joining Oswald Road]..]

Oswald Road chapel's organ was installed in 1901 and in 1966, it was entirely reconditioned, with its 2000+ pipes being removed, cleaned and put in order, together with all the necessary leathers; the manuals were recovered in ivorine and the foot pedals were renewed.

During both wars, the lower part of the building was converted into a canteen which was much used and greatly appreciated by many service people. A plague was erected on the wall in the school-room to commemortate the fact. It reads:

1914-1918

1939-1945

THE SCHOOLROOM WAS USED DURING THE PERIODS OF THE TWO WORLD WARS AS A CANTEEN AND REST ROOM. THOUSANDS OF MEN AND WOMEN FOUND REST, COMPANIONSHIP AND SHELTER HERE. THIS TABLET COMMEMORATES THE DEVOTION OF MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WHO FREELY GAVE OF THEIR TIME TO SERVE HERE DURING THOSE YEARS AND SO HELPED TO BRING COMFORT AND JOY TO OTHERS WHO WERE FAR FROM HOME.

Oswald Road Church had the privilege on several occasions to welcome the Association and in 1959 the responsibility of hosting the General Assembly.

In 1965 the Church membership was 225, and with children and adherents 271, the Sunday School having a regular attendance of 30 out of 35 children. In 1966 it was felt certain that 'there is a place for presbyterianism in Oswestry with its particular emphasis upon certain basic Christian doctrines and upon its form of church administration'. and that Oswald Road would 'continue for years to come to make its contribution to the ... life of the town.' [2] But, this was to take, a perhaps unexpected form, when in 1986 the Elders felt that the future lay with making a joint pastorate with an English-speaking church. 'This was not a lightly taken decision as [the Church's] association with Zion was deeply rooted, as was the freindship between the two congregations.' Yet 'from the first joint elders' meeting with Christ Church URC an affinity was felt'. Although this led to the realisation that one of the churches would have to close, and logic pointed to that being Oswald Road: ' such was [the church's] faith in a joint future with a stronger mission and outreach in the town, that we accepted this with good grace, but not without heartache.' [3] And so Oswald Road moved up the road to join Christ Church in 1988.

Quotes 1, 2 and 3 are from '*A Brief History of Oswald Road Presbyterian Church of Wales*' written by Rev J Price Willams. covering 1866-1966, with a postscript by Jean Livesy 1966-88. With thanks and acknowledgment. [copies for sale on request]