

## Ruhamah Burial Ground

The original Ruhamah Welsh Baptist Chapel was created in 1808 using an old barn close to Newcastle Castle. It remained a consecrated place of worship until 1890, by which time the congregation had grown and the site was not central enough; hence the building of new Ruhamah Chapel located in Wyndham Street on land donated by the Earl of Dunraven.

The original Ruhamah was abandoned in 1894 leaving only the burial ground containing deceased residents mainly from the immediate Newcastle Hill area. The new Ruhamah Chapel had no burial ground as such and the former small burial ground was used until space was exhausted.

Around 1994, Ogwr Borough Council commissioned a conservation project to bring the badly neglected site up to a reasonable standard and by 2000, it was in need of more regular attention because it was not being attended to.

Bridgend Town Council stepped in to carry out annual maintenance and have kept it in reasonable condition for the past 20 years. During this time Bridgend Town Council spent approximately £10,000 on such works, as permitted under the responsibilities that Town and Community Councils can legally undertake.

By 2012, the congregation of Ruhamah Chapel in Wyndham Street had dwindled to just nine regular attenders and the Welsh Baptist Union decided to close and sell the property and amalgamate their congregation with Noddfa Chapel in Porthcawl. The property was sold that year and stands empty to this day.

In 2012, as BTC had regularly helped to keep the burial ground in good order, an approach was made to the HQ of the Welsh Baptist Union in Carmarthen as to the future of the burial ground. In a response on 10 July 2012 the Welsh Baptist Union agreed to dedicate the burial ground to Bridgend Town Council in perpetuity.

BTC received no formal deeds as these were lost however BTC took the dedication in good faith and have continued to this day maintaining the burial ground. BTC also had the land valued for insurance purposes and it is contained within our list of Town Council assets.

In the absence of the deeds, a recent Land Registry search has shown BCBC as the registered owner and the site plans differ from the plans given by the Welsh Baptist Union in 2012. The piece of land fronting the site from Newcastle Hill is omitted; yet Council believed this was part of the transfer to BTC.

The Land Registration was made by BCBC on 17th November 2006. A letter was sent to BCBC in July 2020 to enquire on what basis the land was registered and what happened with regards to ownership prior to this date? It was explained that in view of the amount of time, effort and funds expended by BTC over the past twenty years and the fact that the Welsh Baptist Union clearly was content to a free dedication to BTC that the ownership situation should be resolved.

In April 2021 the Chief Executive of BCBC advised that having conducted investigations, BCBC fully support the formal transfer of the burial ground to Bridgend Town council (see letter attached).

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I have now been contacted by the BCBC Officer that has been allocated the transfer for the site. She has advised that BCBC are prepared to Transfer the asset to BTC for Nil consideration on the grounds that BTC will maintain the site, however, she has advised by BCBC highways department that the path on the external of the property up to the highway be retained and maintained by the BCBC Highways department as it is adopted along with a slither of green adjoining the path for visibility. BCBC are currently working on the plans for this transfer and will forward these on at their earliest convenience.

Council are requested to consider this matter and discuss formal approval for this transfer.

**Leanne Edwards**

**Town Clerk**