

## Lewis Griffiths

1822-1885

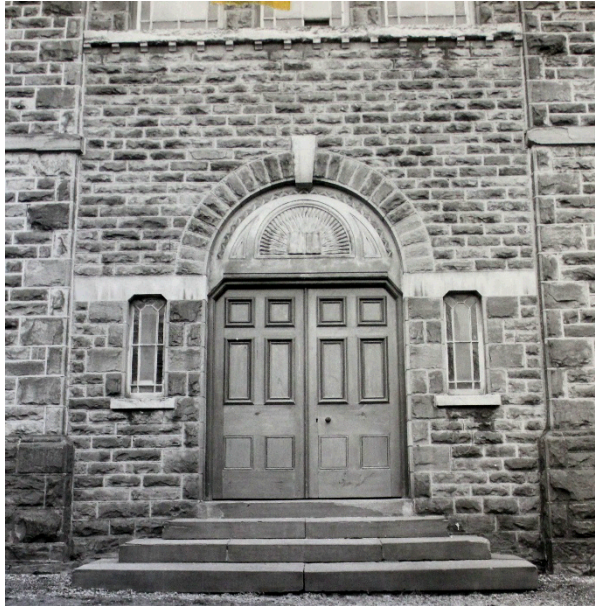
On Thursday afternoon, August 30<sup>th</sup> 1860, hundreds of people gathered to witness laying the foundation stone for the new Nazareth chapel. The Rev. D. Saunders presided, and the ceremony was opened with a prayer from the Rev. John Davies. After Rev. Saunders addressed the congregation, he called on Mrs. John Evans, the Forge, to lay the stone in place. Then there were speeches by Messrs. Benjamin Evans, John Evans, R. Saunders, John Davies, R. Edmunds, D. Griffiths, Aberaman, D. Daniel, Aberaman etc.

The meeting was excellent and influential, and everyone was of the opinion, that the House had been consecrated with the laying of the foundation stone. Around this time Nazareth and Bethania split into two churches with separate accounts, although they worshipped together for some months because Nazareth was not opened until July the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> the following year, when sermons were held in both chapels.

Lewis Griffiths was another of the first deacons in Bethania and he was a great asset. He was one of the eight brothers previously mentioned. Lewis was an official who understood and excelled in his role: he knew everyone in his chapel and soon everyone knew him too. Whenever a stranger came to the town Lewis soon knew all about his history, nationally and religiously; and if he was a Methodist, he would be passionate for them to attend the chapel, and if he failed with the first attempt, he would surely try a second time, until he won him over. Lewis Griffiths was an incomparable shepherd. If strangers came to the chapel, he would ask them if they had work and he was heard to call on a prominent officer of the coalmine to find work for them. He once asked a theologian from Carmarthenshire what kind of preacher they had in the countryside and when the man replied that they could not keep a good preacher that they were attracted to the works; Griffiths replied "Yes, yes, you churn them, and we eat the butter." This is what one lady had to say about him:

"He was one of the gentlest men Bethania ever saw. He was a lively man, full of missionary spirit. He was in his element bringing people together. When we were children, I remember we used to think Mr. Griffiths owned Bethania, and everything in it, inside and out, and there was a great hullabaloo when he had to go to Trinity. At the time we thought Bethania would have to close its doors and follow Mr. Griffiths; but his parents explained that he was on loan from the brothers at Bethania. We often asked, "When is Trinity going to give Mr. Griffiths back?" A particular quality of his was being able to see a stranger. He would take his hymn book, singing, to strangers upstairs and wait for them to come out, and he would ask where they lived, and where they went to chapel and to school; and if the brother, or sister intended to stay in Bethania.

Mr. Griffiths would be after them like a sheepdog. Lewis Griffiths was the announcer, and he made sure that the cream of the organization came to preach at Bethania and was chided by bad preachers for not inviting them on a Sunday. It was worth looking at Lewis Griffiths' face when he was listening to a good sermon, and he would be moved and would look at William Morgan and John Jones the tailor and give them a nod, and who can forget his happy smile with the tears running through it. He had three types of Amens: one to help the preacher, another of enjoyment and another as a cue that it was time for him to finish."



Bethania Chapel.

1885

Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Lewis Griffiths departed this life, aged 63 years old; a good man, and a worker in the vineyard of his Lord. He was known throughout the whole town and neighbourhood, and everyone felt that the district had suffered a great loss, as well as the whole circle of the Methodists in the county. There had never been a man more totally devoted to religious work: he lived for religious work, even to the point of neglecting his trade. He spent most of his time in the service of the church in which he found himself its Sunday school, its ecclesiastical meetings, and those who neglected it. He worked to the end of his days, full of the same spirit to the last, and we knew of nobody more worthy to receive the greeting,

“Good, good and faithful servant; you were faithful on so little, but I will place you upon so much: come unto the joy of your Lord.”

Lewis Griffiths was a tireless pastor (shepherd) for the church, knowing every member and child.



The grave of Daniel & Lewis Griffiths.  
Aberdare Cemetery.