

PENROSE, ST ERVAN
CORNWALL PL27 7TB

PENROSE METHODIST CHAPEL



TRADITION: METHODIST /
BIBLE CHRISTIAN

BUILT: 1861

CONGREGATION ACTIVE
UNTIL: 1998

LISTING: GRADE II*

OS GRID REFERENCE: SW876707

A TINY VILLAGE CHAPEL BUILT
BY METHODISTS - UNTOUCHED
INSIDE, SO A RARE SURVIVOR.



TRANSPORT

The chapel is on the main street of Penrose, 4 miles south of Padstow, between Porthcorthan and St Ervan. On-street parking nearby. Bodmin Parkway is 12 miles away.

VISIT US

To visit contact our volunteer keyholder: 01841 540737. Or see www.hct.org.uk

There are no toilet facilities on site.

The pulpit and organ.



HISTORY & BACKGROUND

Built in 1861, the tiny chapel at Penrose has a significance beyond its small size. Its interest lies in the survival of its original modest appearance, together with its interior fixtures and fittings. It stands as a testament to the vitality and huge impact of Cornish Methodism among working class communities in the nineteenth century. Once common in Cornwall, many such small village chapels have been lost or converted to other uses.

The chapel was built by Bible Christians James Tippett, a local master mason, and his younger brother William, a journeyman mason, on land purchased from a local farmer for £5.

The Bible Christians were a predominantly Cornish branch of Methodism who focused the efforts of their preaching on rural areas and small hamlets like Penrose. The movement, and Methodism in general, was clearly very popular at the time of the chapel's foundation, as nearby Rumford already possessed both a Wesleyan Methodist and a Bible Christian chapel.

This chapel's foundation sermon was preached on 24th May 1861 by the Reverend Samuel J. Thorne, grandson of the founder of the Bible Christians, William O'Bryan. It was not until June, however, that the land the chapel was situated on was purchased from John Binney, the local farmer who owned the site. The trustees included three millers, three yeomen and the mason, James Tippett, all of whom had family connections in St Ervan. This helps to highlight the importance of the chapel to the local working class community, and the grassroots nature of the endeavour. The first service was held on 17th November 1861, and James Tippett was one of the first trustees. The tiny chapel initially had a thriving congregation- the Bible Christian Magazine reported that 'the chapel is crowded constantly, the singing is excellent, and a small church formed.'. The Bible Christian Magazine reported in 1903 that 'Mr and Mrs Tippett and daughter, Mr Curtis, Mr Old and Miss Old do good work' highlighting the continued connection the Tippetts had with Penrose. Indeed, in the 1961 centenary celebrations, organised by the Revd. Albert Cowell and Winnie Lobb, the chapel was presented with hymn books by the grandchildren of James Tippett.

By this point, however, the congregation had begun to split its time between Penrose and the Methodist chapel in Rumford, as a result of declining numbers, and in 1998 the chapel closed.

ENQUIRE & HIRE

PENROSE CHAPEL IS REGISTERED FOR METHODIST MARRIAGES, AND CAN ALSO BE HIRED FOR SMALL EVENTS, SUCH AS READINGS OR RECITALS

To find out more visit www.hct.org.uk or contact chapels@hct.org.uk

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THE EXTERIOR

In keeping with Methodist tradition, the exterior of the chapel is plain. The recently restored roof is made of rag slate, while the building itself is also of local slate. The wood-panelled door in the centre of the north wall dates from 1861, and is flanked by two simple sash windows. Above the door is an inscription identifying the building as a Methodist chapel, and was presumably added after the formation of the Methodist Church in 1932.

THE INTERIOR

The chapel is equally unassuming internally. The focal point of the small room is the pulpit, indicative of the Methodist emphasis on preaching.

In front of the pulpit is a large 'leaders' pew' where the, choir and church leaders would sit. It is also where church business would be conducted, as there was no other available space in the building. Facing towards the rostrum and leaders' area are box pews.

The significance of Penrose lies in the fact that it retains all of its original fittings. On the north wall, to the left of the rostrum, is a framed preaching plan from 1896, while the walls also display plaques to notable members of the congregation.

Bessie Lobb, commemorated to the right of the rostrum, was the organist at the chapel for over fifty years before her death in 1952. Unusually, hat pegs run along three of the chapel's walls.



FURTHER READING

Richard Broadhead, Clyde Binfield and Moira Tangye, *Penrose Chapel, Cornwall - A History, Guide and Memories* (ISBN 978-0-9573725-0-4 London, 2012)

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

Following the closure of the building in 1998, Penrose was transferred to the care of the Historic Chapels Trust in 1999, the first Methodist chapel to be acquired. While the chapel was for the most part structurally sound, the modern asbestos roof was returned to slate, and stone repointing, replastering and repainting helped to restore the building to its original appearance.