

## Church Surgery's Secret

Last updated: 24 November 2005

Did you know that the organ on which Joseph Parry composed the hymn tune 'Aberystwyth' lies hidden in a converted Church building in the town? Local builder **Charlie Downes** sent us a selection of photos showing how a former Church in Portland Street became home to a doctors' surgery and a drama company.



This photograph of the Church was taken in 1986, shortly before renovation work began.

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The Church was built in the 1860s and was known as The English Congregational Church, then as the United Reformed Church. In the early 1980s, extensive dry rot was discovered in the building which would cost thousands of pounds to repair. With dwindling congregations, a decision was made to sell the building. This picture was taken shortly before the property developers moved in.

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### your comments

#### eleanor from Notts

My ancestor Charles James Campbell was a deacon and trustee of this church for nine years in the early 1900s and I wonder if anyone has any more information about him. I know also that he was an engine driver on the Cambrian railway, secretary of the N.U.R. for 12 years and a chief ranger of the Teify Lodge of Free Foresters.  
Tue Sep 9 16:26:51 2008

#### Yvonne James, Bristol

Used to live in Aberystwyth was not aware of the work carried out at the church. Good set of photographs  
Thu Sep 13 12:15:14 2007

#### Lil from Aberystwyth

Fascinating... I'm going to the surgery today actually, will be having a look.  
Fri Sep 1 13:48:06 2006

#### Janet from Aberystwyth

What an interesting set of photographs. Although sad that the organ was bricked up, it's nice for future generations to know of its whereabouts (and the step by step photographic evidence). Love looking at these sort of photos ('before, during and after'). Interesting to read about the whereabouts of the Celtic projector.

Wed Oct 26 21:29:24 2005

**Ian from Aberystwyth**

Did you also know that the projector from the old Celtic cinema was so bulky that when the Celtic cinema was demolished, the projector was buried in situ, in what is now the car-park behind the Commodore cinema?!

Fri Sep 16 11:36:34 2005

**Angela from Chepstow**

I've spotted Reg, Howard, Kenny and Tracy. But where were you Charlie!!!

Fri Sep 16 11:19:39 2005

**This site is now closed and cannot accept new comments.**

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← These windows had to be removed in order to create an entrance for building machinery and equipment. →

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The building was bought by two local groups - a practice of GPs and the Arad Goch theatre company.

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← An opening large enough for a JCB machine was created in the front wall of the building. →

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The original pews also had to be cleared.

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After the pews had been removed, the big machines moved in to excavate the ground floor.

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← But there was a slight problem - what about the old church organ? →  
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Despite extensive enquiries, no organisation or individual wanted to buy the Church organ.

Pictured here are quantity surveyor Martin Jenkins (left) and Charlie's brother-in-law the late Howard Connor.

**Charlie Downes:** "I would like to dedicate this slideshow to Howard Connor's memory. He was the Chief Mason on the project and personally rebuilt the top of the Church tower."

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It was on this organ that Dr. Joseph Parry composed the hymn tune 'Aberystwyth'.

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Dr Joseph Parry was the first Professor of Music at University of Wales Aberystwyth. You can read more about his local connections in our [Hall of Fame...](#)

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← A decision was made to leave the organ in situ but to brick it in behind a partition wall. →

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Gradually, the organ was bricked in...

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The new GPs surgery would come up to the wall behind which the organ would be hidden. The Arad Goch space would start at the other side of the wall.

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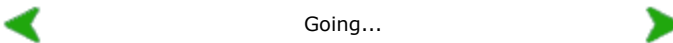
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Internal walls were built to create consulting rooms and other areas for the new doctors' surgery.

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◀ A new floor was created at the top of the building. ▶

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← The original Church spire had to be taken down. →

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← Scaffolding was erected around the original spire. →

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The view from the top of the Church.

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◀ The original spire was replaced with a smaller tower. ▶

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A photograph of Church Surgery as it is today.

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