

MOLLESTON BAPTIST CHAPEL

Ref number	PGW (Dy) 66 (PEM)
OS Map	158
Grid ref	SN 093 118
Former county	Dyfed
Unitary authority	Pembrokeshire
Community council	Templeton
Designations	Listed building: Molleston Baptist Chapel Grade II
Site evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	The survival of a formal, ornamental approach to the earliest Baptist chapel in Pembrokeshire.
Type of site	Chapel grounds
Main phases of construction	mid eighteenth century

Site description

Molleston Baptist Chapel is situated about two kilometres west of Templeton, a short distance to the north of the A4115 road. It is a wayside chapel in an isolated position in a gently rolling area of agricultural land, with a single house, Molleston House, to its south-west. The chapel is a plain, rendered, rectangular building, with a slate roof. It is orientated north-west/south-east, with three tall windows on each long side and a round-arched entrance door, with a similar window over it, at the south-east end. An oval marble plaque over the door records the chapel's building history. According to this the chapel was built in 1731, at the expense of Thomas George Molleston, was enlarged in 1842 and renovated in 1883.

Molleston was first used for meetings and baptisms by the Baptists in 1667. It was a branch of Rushacre, Narberth, the first meeting place in the county and both were established as a result of the work of William Jones. The first minister was Griffith Williams, who was baptised at Molleston in 1714. The building is of mid eighteenth-century origin, the date of 1731 on the plaque being for the formation, rather than building, of the chapel. In 1736 the Revd Evan Thomas became minister and it was under him that the building was erected. In 1754 Thomas George, of Molleston Farm, was granted a 999-year lease of the site from Daniel Poyer, of The Grove, and he paid for the building work. Under the will of John George, in 1799, the chapel devised to trustees, for the purpose of public worship by Protestant Dissenters called Baptists. It has been used for this purpose ever since.

The present building is much altered from the original eighteenth-century one. As recorded on the plaque, it was enlarged in 1842 and renovated in 1883. Inside it is

a baptismal pool, replacing the original open-air one, which was 50m to the east of the chapel, in the present graveyard.

The chapel has an impressive, formal approach from the A4115, to the south, of a straight drive flanked by an avenue of mature trees. These are mainly oak but include some pine, beech, yew and a few younger cypresses. Beyond the avenue substantial hedge banks run parallel to it. The entrance is set back from the road. It has two simple iron gates flanked by square stone piers about 1.8 m high. Outside these are curving stone walls about 1.4 m high, with triangular coping. At the inner, north end of the drive are further iron gates, here flanked by modern concrete piers.

North of the drive is a parking area bounded by a rubble stone wall on the north and a hedge bank on the east. To its west is the tarmac forecourt of the chapel. North of this and the chapel is the graveyard. This has been enlarged northwards and is now bounded on the north by a breeze block wall. The only planting in the graveyard is a large pine at the west end.

It is probable that the formal approach to the chapel is contemporary with its building in the mid eighteenth century. It is shown on the 1840 tithe map, together with a square enclosure to the east of the chapel, corresponding to the eastern half of the present enclosure. A flanking avenue may well have been planted at this time and maintained by replanting ever since. The 1889 25 in. Ordnance Survey map (surveyed in 1888) shows the avenue, its southern half planted at that time with conifers. The map also shows two conifers on the west side of the burial ground, which had been enlarged by this time, and two on the north-west boundary, one of which is probably the present-day pine in this position. The appearance on this map of Molleston House shows that it was built between 1840 and 1888. A stream is shown entering the burial ground from the east and leading to a 'tank', the baptismal pool, east of the chapel. Both stream and 'tank' have now gone.

Sources

Primary

Tithe map, 1840: Pembrokeshire Record Office, Haverfordwest.

Secondary

James, J.I., *Molleston Baptist Church* (1968).