

1.3.2.5 Ground & First Floor, the Main Auditorium and Ancillary Spaces

The Main Hall is the largest and most important space in the Tabernacle. It is a vast double-height space occupying most of the ground and first floors. The first floor gallery fully encircles the room in one elegant unbroken ribbon of wood, and incorporates not only the organ but also tiered seating for the choir behind the pulpit. Tiered seating for the congregation continues around the full extent of the gallery. The pews and gallery balustrading are constructed from timber, possibly oak or a light-coloured mahogany. Pierced filigree decoration is surmounted onto the balustrade of the gallery which features a central clock opposite the pulpit. This is a common feature of Welsh chapels and allowed the minister to time his sermons. At the time of writing, dry rot had been found within the southern wall of the Chapel which was in the process of being treated; as such one side of the gallery was not fully accessible. Most of the pews, particularly those located further back in the gallery are covered in substantial amounts of incised graffiti, and there are several small areas of damaged timberwork in the balustrade and on individual pews.

The organ is not original to the building but is a fine example of a '3-manual' organ installed by noted organ manufacturers Hill, Norman & Beard in 1922. The casing of the organ is of a Gothic design which contrasts with the otherwise Classical detailing and decorative finish of the majority of the Chapel. The windows to either side of the organ were installed after World War I to commemorate the lives lost during the conflict. On the ceiling above the organ is stencilled the words *Addolwch yr Arglwydd mewn Prydferthwch Sancteiddrwydd* (Worship ye the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness), from Psalm 96. The stencilled decoration throughout the Hall appears to have been refreshed fairly recently. Rubbing down of paintwork around the windows has revealed earlier stencilling of deep red on a blue background. This is possibly original. The existing gallery stencilling is not original but maintains the historic pattern and effect.

The elliptical arched ceiling of the Hall is supported by ribs extended from carved stone corbels on the north and south walls. The ceiling is lightly coffered with gilded and painted decorative mouldings. It appears that the Hall retains its three original gasoliers, though they have been converted to electricity. The Hall retains a historic heating system; which remains in use. Though the exact date of this historic system is unknown, the historic radiators which line the Hall at both ground and first floor level are inscribed W. F. Spencer, Heating Engineers, Oldham 'Ventilo'. W. F. Spencer are known to have been in operation during the later 19th century, therefore the radiators may be original to the building or are at least, a very early installation. Modern radiators have been installed to supplement this at ground floor level.

At ground floor level, the floor gently slopes downwards towards the pulpit and the pews are arranged in staggered pattern to accommodate the cast iron piers which support the gallery above. Although not confirmed, it appears that some previous pew removal has taken place either side of the pulpit. Conversely, pews may have not have existed in this location. The piers themselves are comparatively delicate, comprising slender columns topped with painted and gilded capitals which echo the Corinthian columns on the exterior elevations.

The principal feature of the ground floor, and the main focus of the Hall is the pulpit and the Sedd Fawr (Big Seat) below. The Sedd Fawr is where elders or Deacons are seated and is feature unique to Welsh Chapels. The pulpit and Sedd Fawr at Morriston is a particularly ornate example, with lavishly carved foliate decoration and sweeping handrails leading to the pulpit. Classical elements which visible in the architecture of the building; arcades, round arches and Corinthian pilasters are repeated in the design of the pulpit and are of very high quality. Like the pews, the Sedd Fawr and pulpit are original to the building, and appear to have undergone minimal alteration, though where some modern cabling and lighting have been attached to the pulpit, this has caused some minor damage to the timberwork.

