



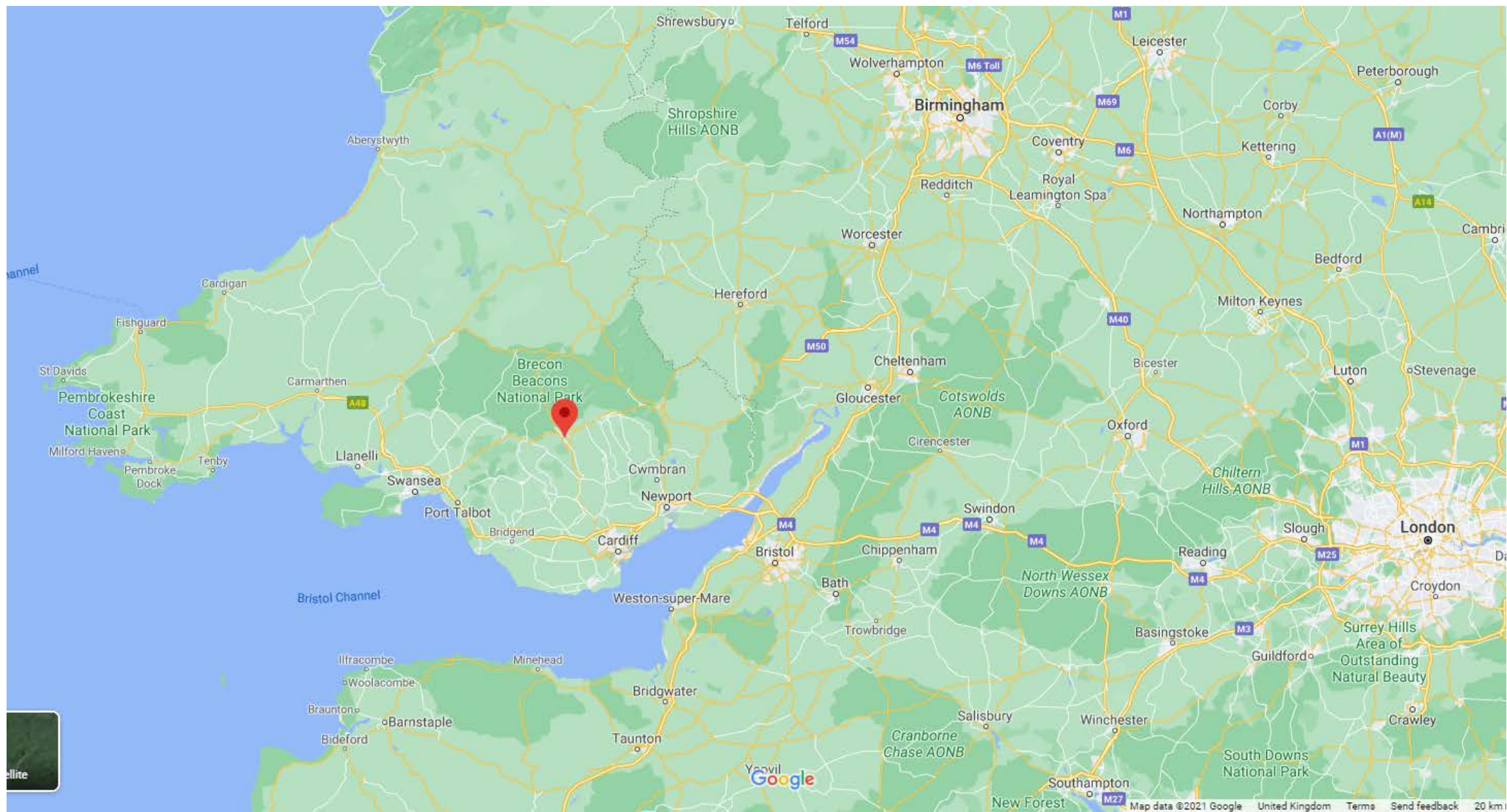
Saving the last Synagogue of the Valleys

The Historic Religious Buildings Alliance
The Big Update

10th March 2021

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Merthyr Tydfil
(Image: Richard Swingler. WalesOnline)

Merthyr Tydfil – The Town of Steel – Development

- **Mid 1700s** a small Welsh farming village
- **1759** **Dowlais Ironworks established**
- **1763 – 1784** **Plymouth, Cyfartha and Penydarren Ironworks begin blast furnace operations**
- **1801** the largest settlement in Wales (first national census – population 7,500)
- **1804** the World's first steam locomotive to run on rails hauls wagons along a new tramroad linking the Ironworks to the Glamorganshire Canal
- **1820s** **the source of 40% of Britain's iron exports**
- **1831** The Merthyr Rising. Mass rally and general strike where the red flag as a symbol of workers' insurrection was raised for the first time in British history

Merthyr Tydfil – The Jewish Community & the Synagogue

- **1848** a small synagogue was built in Victoria Street
- **1872 - 1875** construction of the (third) synagogue
- **1877** consecration of the synagogue
- **1919 - 1979** fall in membership from 400 individuals to 20
- **1982** synagogue is sold
- **c.1986 - 1994** synagogue used as a Christian Centre and a Gym
- **2004** synagogue unused and derelict



Exterior after remedial
works (October 2020)

(Image: Ashley DAVIES Architects
Limited, Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue –
Architect's Report on Completion of
Emergency Works)



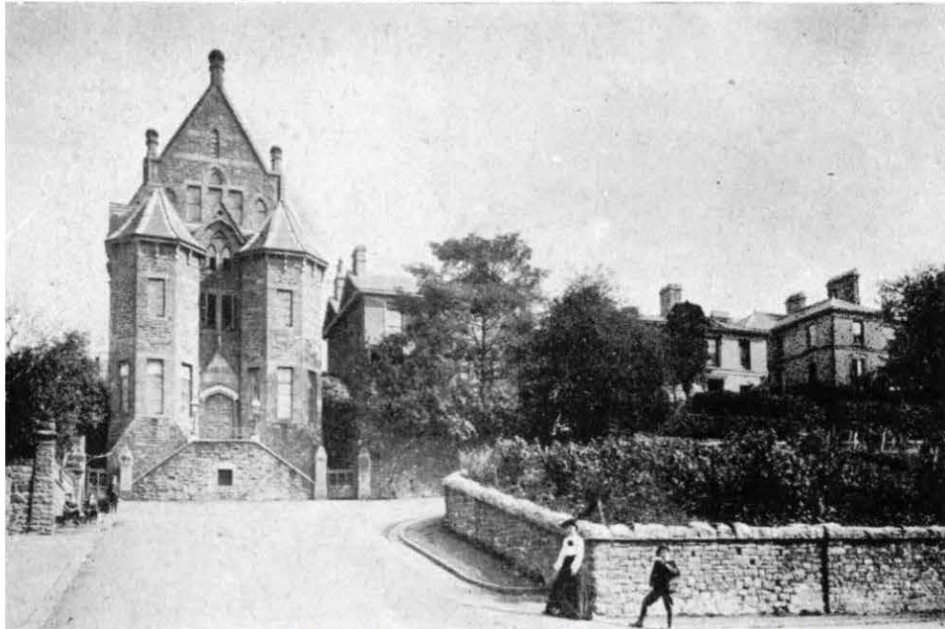
Undated photograph
(Image: Ashley DAVIES Architects
Limited, Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue –
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Emergency Works)

What is meant by a Jewish community?

“a ‘Jewish community’ is defined here as a self-conscious and unified entity whose members interact in religious worship and/or social and cultural activities. It is not however, necessarily defined by a geographical location or boundary...”

Dr Cai Parry-Jones, p.14, *The Jews of Wales. A History* (2017)

5.4 Historic Photographs of the Synagogue - Externally



View of Merthyr Synagogue up Church Street - c.1904 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk' website)



Merthyr Synagogue - Pre-1910
(source: 'The National Library of Israel' website)



Merthyr Synagogue - May 1978
(source: 'casgliadywerin.cymru' website)



View of Merthyr Synagogue up Church Street - dated unknown (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk' website)



Painting looking up Church Street by Olwen Hughes - possibly 1886 (source: 'merthyr-history.com' website)

(Images: Ashley DAVIES
Architects Limited, Merthyr Tydfil
Synagogue – Architect's Report on
Completion of Emergency Works)

5.5 Historic Photographs of the Synagogue - Internally - all c.1978 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk' website)



Synagogue at first floor looking eastwards towards 'ark'



Synagogue east elevation windows



Synagogue at first floor looking eastwards towards 'ark'

(Images: Ashley DAVIES
Architects Limited, Merthyr Tydfil
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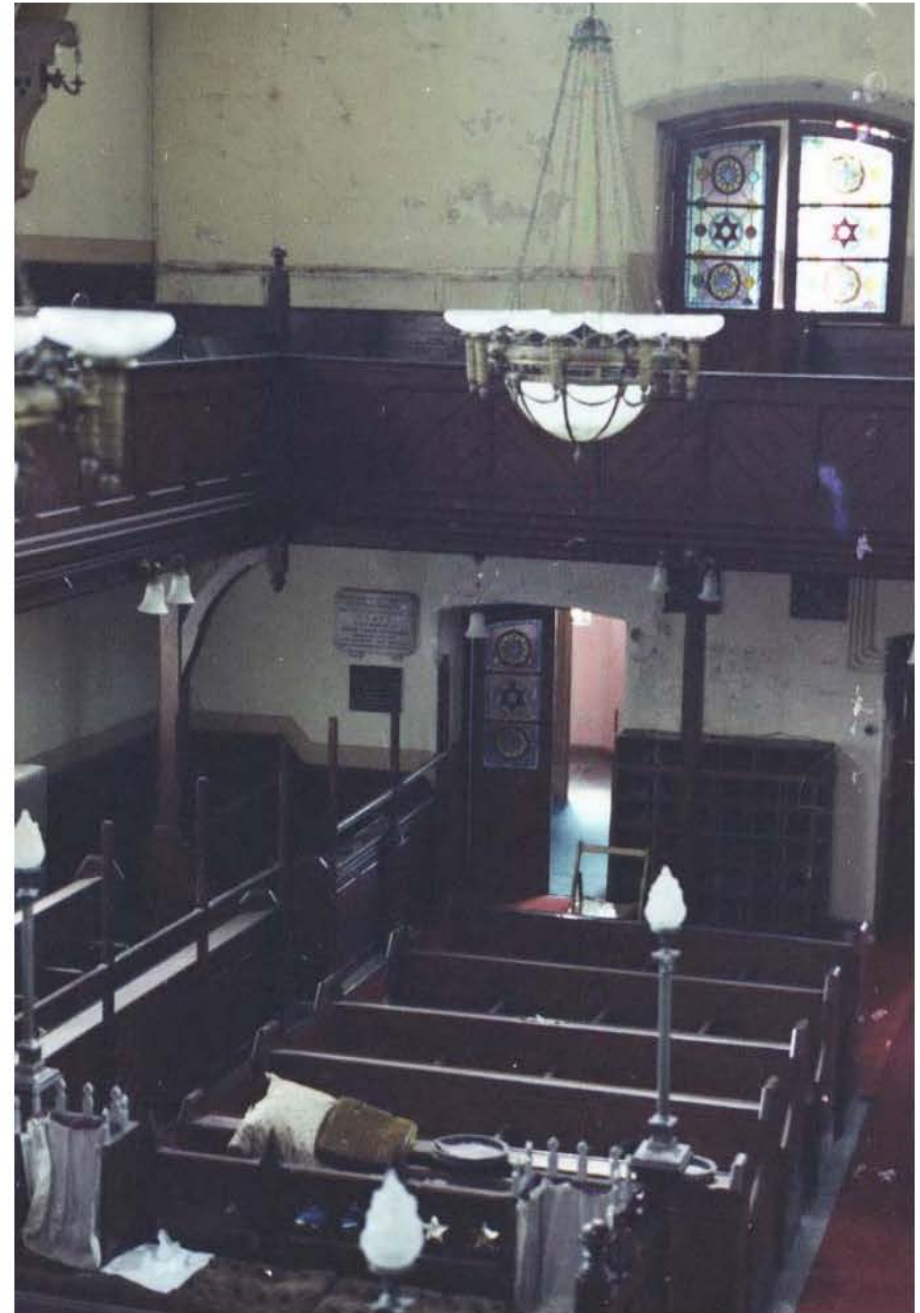
5.5 Historic Photographs of the Synagogue - Internally - all c.1978 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk' website)



Synagogue at first floor looking westwards towards entrance



Synagogue at first floor looking westwards towards entrance



Synagogue at first floor looking westwards from high level towards entrance & rear of ladies balcony

(Images: Ashley DAVIES
Architects Limited, Merthyr Tydfil
Synagogue – Architect's Report on
Completion of Emergency Works)

7.4 The First Floor Interior **BEFORE** the works (taken February 2019)



The First Floor Interior **AFTER** the works (taken October / November 2020)



(Images: Ashley DAVIES
Architects Limited, Merthyr Tydfil
Synagogue – Architect's Report on
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7.3 The Second Floor Interior BEFORE the works (taken February 2019)



The Second Floor Interior AFTER the works (taken October / November 2020)



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Jewish Heritage