

CHAPELS SOCIETY

Aspiration and Humility

Visit to Harrogate and Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire, 22 September 2012

General Arrangements for the Day

*Meet at **Wesley Methodist Church**, Oxford St, Harrogate, HG1 1PP, 10.00-10.30 am in the lower ground floor hall. (If entering at the front, use lift to LGF.) Tea and coffee will be available.

Oxford St is in the central shopping area of Harrogate and is within walking distance of the railway and bus stations. Immediately behind the chapel is a multi-storey car-park accessible from Cheltenham Parade. (This may prove fairly expensive for a day-long stay!)

*There will be a short talk on the building and its history given in the main worship space.

*At approximately 11.20 am we will walk through the centre of town to **St. Paul's URC** on Victoria Avenue (walk will take 8-10 minutes).

*At approximately 12.00 pm we will walk down Victoria Avenue to **West Park URC** (3-4 mins.).

*At approximately 12.35 pm we will walk to **Trinity Methodist Church**, Trinity Rd, Harrogate (6-8 mins), where we will have a buffet lunch and a short talk on the building and its history.

*At 1.45-2.00 pm we will board a mini-bus for the journey to Pateley Bridge (approx. 30 mins).

*We will stop at **Darley Methodist Church** as we descend into Nidderdale where there will be a brief stop to visit the church and hear a little of its history.

*The bus journey continues through Pateley to the north where we will visit the very small chapel at **Wath**. Again there will be a local historian to talk to us about the building.

*The final visit takes us to **Pateley Bridge Methodist Church** where, in addition to hearing about the building, we will have a buffet tea. It is planned that we leave the chapel at approximately 5.20 pm to return to Harrogate for 6.00 pm.

Notes on the Chapels included in the Tour

1. **Wesley Methodist Church**, Oxford Street, Harrogate (Grade II)

An imposing neo-classical (Italianate style) building sited in a prominent position on Oxford St in central Harrogate. Opened in 1862, the church was designed by the well-known Bradford architects Lockwood and Mawson. (This practice was also employed by Sir Titus Salt at Saltaire.) A two-storey construction, built into rising ground, but essentially a grand single storey at the main entrance on Oxford St. This facade is dominated by giant Corinthian half-columns and pilasters forming the pedimented front. All is built with locally quarried sandstone.

Internally an apsidal-ended gallery with typically high pulpit and pipe organ forms the worship space. Fixed pews are installed at both main and gallery floor levels. The entrance foyer has been much changed by the addition of lift, toilets etc. during work undertaken in the early 1990s. The lower ground floor comprises general-purpose hall, meeting rooms, kitchen, toilets and office.

2. **St Paul's URC**, Victoria Avenue, Harrogate

This church (formerly Presbyterian), designed by the Newcastle architects Newcombe and Knowles, was completed in 1885. Conceived in the free perpendicular style, the building contrives a continuous clerestory within the roof line (effectively a dormer) which admits a generous amount of natural light. The roof is an interesting hammer-beam timber construction providing the principal architectural feature within the main chapel. A tower with an octagonal belfry stage is built at the north-west corner.

The church is not listed.

The original congregation was brought together in 1875 as part of the Presbytery of Darlington and worshipped in an 'iron church'. In 1876 it became a sanctioned charge, able to call its own minister. Within ten years it had begun construction of the present stone property which eventually opened in 1894. At this time the membership was about 60; currently the membership stands at about 250 and it is the largest United Reformed Church in Yorkshire.

3. *West Park URC*, Victoria Avenue, Harrogate (Grade II)

West Park has been described as 'one of the most significant monuments of Victorian Harrogate'. Before the erection of the church, Harrogate was divided into two villages, High Harrogate and Low Harrogate. Between the two villages there was agricultural land. In 1860, with the coming of the central railway station, the Victoria Park Company was formed to develop this agricultural land and thus link the two villages to form a new and modern town. At the heart of the project was a fashionable thoroughfare, Victoria Avenue. The development company offered two of the most prestigious sites on the Avenue to the rich banker, John Smith, and the Congregational Church. Smith built Belvedere Mansion on the south-western corner of the Avenue and the Church built their chapel on the opposite side.

An important built statement was demanded and consequently the church authorities commissioned Lockwood and Mawson as their architects. They designed a neo-Gothic chapel in the early decorated style with a tower rising to an octagonal lantern and topped by an elegant spire. The building was opened in 1862. This was clearly an aspirational design, as befitted the ambitions of the new spa town and the Victoria Park Company. Of particular interest are the twelve gargoyles sited on the southern facade. These were intended, by the architects, to be the grotesque forms traditionally seen in medieval churches but the members wished for a statement that was 'the truth as it is in Jesus' and chose important historical figures who advocated 'the truth'. These include prominent theologians from John Wyclif to Philip Doddridge, a monarch (William III) and early Presbyterians.

4. *Trinity Methodist Church*, Trinity Road, Harrogate (Grade II)

This chapel was, again, an aspirational building constructed by the Methodists to reflect their status and standing within the new and prosperous town. Sited at the southern end of the Stray, it occupied an important location amongst many quality residences. The architects were Morley and Woodhouse of Bradford, who were competitors of Lockwood and Mawson. The design is neo-Gothic, 'spiky rock-faced' to rival that of West Park, and was completed in 1880. The main northern facade is tall and stately in character and was enhanced significantly by the addition of the grand spire in 1889. The interior is spacious (seating when finished some 800 people) and very well appointed. There is a gallery around three sides which, at the rear, rose imposingly to the prominent 'west' window. There are deep transepts, not typical of most Methodist chapels, within which were installed at various times, sections of interesting stained glass. Specifically, in the north transept, is a window by Clayton and Bell dating from 1919. A magnificent pipe organ stands behind the raised pulpit, and is still in use for weekly worship.

During the last three years the Trustees have undertaken a major scheme of re-ordering within the main chapel. Although this work has much altered the original interior, the character of the space has been sensitively preserved. The resultant accommodation is more convenient and accessible for both church and community use.

5. *Darley Methodist Church*, Main Street, Darley (Grade II)

A small unpretentious village chapel built in 1829. A later schoolroom annexe was added in 1929. Much of the property remains as originally constructed. The chapel interior comprises a charming small worship area with a balcony to the rear. The nineteenth-century pews are arranged in three

blocks with side aisles. Three further rows of pews are located in the balcony but this space is screened by vertical sliding sash panels which are opened when the additional seating is required. The ceiling is pine-boarded in simple panels as are the lower walls. Remaining wall areas are plastered. The chapel members followed the Wesleyan tradition and consequently there is, albeit understated, a small hint of decoration in the sanctuary stained glass.

6. *Wath Methodist Church*, Pateley Bridge

Located within the heart of the farming community of the Dale, this chapel represents the simplest of aspiration in the provision of a House of God. Here stands an extremely small place of worship designed to accommodate the few local people who desired to worship in the nonconformist tradition. Built in 1859, the chapel is constructed at the end (and attached to) a pair of eighteenth-century cottages. The construction is in traditional coursed sandstone with a slate pitched roof. It was built to the width of the cottages and follows the line of the adjacent road which has resulted in a rather peculiar and asymmetric plan arrangement. It is, in effect, an irregular pentagon.

The internal layout is, of course, dictated by the asymmetry. The congregational seating is spread over two floors and is aligned with the gable of the cottage and provides space for about fifty worshippers. A tiny staircase, giving access to the first floor, is sited next to the single point of entrance. To the other side of the entrance lies the pulpit and alongside a free-standing organ. The pews appear to be original.

The form of construction is inevitably traditional and there are indications that, given the fundamental simplicity, local members were involved in the process.

The building is (at present) not listed.

7. *Pateley Bridge Methodist Church*, Ripon Road, Pateley Bridge

The chapel is located at the upper end of the town's High Street and is built into the steep side of the Nidderdale valley. Opened in 1909, it was designed as a simple Gothic revival church over two main levels. A section of an earlier nineteenth-century chapel remains at the southern end. The worship space is sited at the upper ground floor and adjoins the earlier schoolroom accommodation. Meeting rooms and kitchen lie at the lower level. The building is relatively undistinguished but, once again, met the aspirations of a growing local congregation who were moving away from a solely agricultural way of life. The arrival of the railway further enhanced Pateley's status as a prime market town and established the beginning of the tourist trade.

In 2009, to mark their centenary, the Trustees completed a major refurbishment of the church. The worship space was much altered; the pews were removed, the floor levelled and under-floor heating added. The general amenities were improved with a modern kitchen and toilets. Access to the property was also improved along with an enlarged car-park and lift access between the two major floors.

The building is not listed.

N.B. All the churches in the Nidderdale valley are within an area designated of 'Outstanding Natural Beauty' and consequently any proposed change is subject to approval under conservation planning legislation.