

Chapels Society Outing to Newcastle upon Tyne Saturday, 10 October 2009

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All travel instructions are given in boxes throughout.

Getting to and getting around Newcastle.

Those travelling by air, train, Metro ((underground), bus or private car to the **Newcastle Central Rail Station** should gather at the **'Information' stand (in front of WH Smith) near the main exit. We meet between 9.30 and 10.15.** Newcastle boasts 10,000 city centre parking spaces but, if you use one of them, ensure that you have enough time to get to the Central Station from it.

As each group of members accumulates it will depart immediately with its Group Leader for the day. The Group Leaders are: Nigel McMurray, Lynne Redhead (Newcastle City Guide), Olive Taylor (Newcastle City Guide) and Sheila Wilson (Newcastle City Guide). Please stay with the same Group Leader throughout the day as Newcastle is very crowded on Saturdays. Members are encouraged to arrive earlier rather than later: if all members arrive at the Central Station at 10.15 then we will be confronted with a real logistical problem of getting everyone on board the public transport buses at once. Travel throughout the day is by public bus service; any Senior Citizen local authority bus pass applies or purchase a £3.30 Day Ticket on boarding the first bus. Two walks only are also involved; one is downhill and the other is 500 metres on the flat.

Those intending to meet the tour at **Westgate Baptist Church**, 366 Westgate Road [Westgate Road / Northcote Street] NE4 6NX will find free on-road parking but no parking on the Church premises. (A single bus journey from our final venue will take you back to your car at Westgate Baptist Church.)

Maps are not supplied but in the event of your getting lost or being displaced from your group then 'phone Nigel McMurray on 07984 706 263. Please use this number on the day of the Outing only.

Refer to page 4 for further details.

Eating arrangements during the Outing.

Morning tea or coffee is not scheduled at our first venue and so members may wish to avail themselves of liquid refreshment prior to departure from the Central Station. Liquid refreshment only will be available at lunch time at Brunswick Methodist Church; members should either bring a packed lunch with them or make purchases at one of the venues at the Central Station prior to our departing from there. Newcastle will be too busy to allow purchase of foodstuffs in the short time that we will be at Brunswick.

Nonconformity and Dissent in Newcastle.

The town of Newcastle became an autonomous county in 1400, a city in 1882 and its parish church of St Nicholas became a cathedral in 1882. It has had the office of Lord Mayor since 1906. The expansion of Nonconformity is reasonably easy to map, though comparing like with like over the years is difficult, given that the local government boundary of Newcastle has changed and expanded over the centuries. And Newcastle cannot be readily divorced from its hinterlands of Northumberland to the north and west and the county of Durham to the south. There was never active persecution of Dissent and Nonconformity in Newcastle, with only the **Society of Friends** facing a short period of organised opposition. **Judaism** (considered beyond the brief of these notes) was, again, not subject to specific persecution and has had a considerable presence for 150 years, its origin in general being that of refugees from Poland, Russia and central Europe.

An estimate of Dissenting congregations in Newcastle in **1715** suggests 3 Presbyterian, 1 Unitarian, 1 Congregationalist and a small company of the Society of Friends.

The **1851 Religious Census** showed the total Methodist attendances as one thirteenth of the population, compared with one sixth for the Church of England and one tenth for non-Methodist Nonconformity.

But by **1920**, as per listings in the *Newcastle upon Tyne Official Blue Book*, there was an entirely different faith landscape with the 31 Anglican parishes, 9 Roman Catholic parishes and 2 synagogues being under the shadow of 72 churches within the normally understood remit of Nonconformity. Their designations were as follows; 36 Methodist (18 Wesleyan, 9 United, 8 Primitive, 1 Independent), 13 Presbyterian Church of England, 5 Congregational, 6 Baptist (including 1 Strict and Particular Baptist), 3 Salvationist, 2 Lutheran, 2 Christian Science, 1 Church of Scotland, 1 Society of Friends, 1 Seventh Day Adventist, 1 Unitarian and 1 Swedenborgian. In addition there was a Catholic Apostolic presence and upwards of 10 Brethren (Open and Exclusive) congregations. The political leadership and financial patronage of wealthy Nonconformist businessmen made a powerful impact on the city as did the radical socialism of the Methodists.

The active and growing congregations of late **20th** and **early 21st** century Nonconformist Newcastle have seen a further spiritual shift to Pentecostal, Community Churches, Gospel Halls and Black and Asian Churches. The genesis of Novocastrian Pentecostalism was in the 1960s with an Elim Church in the east end and an Assembly of God in the west end. Pastor Herbert Harrison (Assemblies of God) was then a national figure in Pentecostalism. A more recent legacy was the conversion of Davey Falcus, gang leader and drug dealer, now an international evangelist. Street Pastors are recognised as a significant social and spiritual outreach supported by all the mainstream Protestant denominations. Evangelistic outreach remains a feature of some churches within the mainstream denominations. There is no recorded history of Orthodoxy in Newcastle though a Greek Orthodox congregation (mainly Cypriot) currently worships monthly in St Andrews Church of England.

An overview of the main elements of Nonconformity in the city follows.

The 1845 Irish Potato Famine resulted in an influx of **Roman Catholics** who would constitute 8% of the population by 1851. Father James Worswick conducted the first post-Reformation mass in 1798 at his home off Pilgrim Street (now Worswick Street); he masterminded the building of St Mary's which attained cathedral status in 1850.

There has always been both a tension and an affinity between Northumberland and Scotland. The affinity has been the stronger since the Union of the Crowns and this is reflected in the number of **Presbyterian** congregations, which increased during the Industrial Revolution with the influx of Scottish shipbuilders who built churches for their workers.

Newcastle, being one of Wesley's three national centres (along with London and Bristol), played a pivotal part in the history of early **Methodism**, though nothing remains of his Orphan House headquarters. Christopher Hopper from nearby County Durham was the only man in Wesley's lifetime allowed to be President of Conference (1780) apart from Wesley himself. Post-Wesley, all of the denominations of Methodism, except the Bible Christians, held their Conferences in Newcastle.

Hot on their heels came the **Salvationists**, who can be considered to have originated on the Tyne, given that William Booth, their founder, was then a United Methodist minister in Gateshead. Six Hallelujah Girls sang their way over the Swing Bridge in 1879 and a great revival began. Their 'salvation cathedral' – the Newcastle City Temple – has just closed for structural reasons and its congregation now worships at Brunswick Methodist; things have come full circle.

Nonconformity was also involved in education, of which the most significant legacy is Northumbria University which can be traced back to Rev John Rutherford's Bath Lane **Congregational** School.

The **Lutherans** were predominantly Scandinavian seamen for whom Newcastle was, next to London, their main trading port. A former Lutheran Seamen's Mission chapel still stands on the quayside. The present Martin Luther Kirche serves three congregations of German and Scandinavian origin.

From the 1880s increased leisure time in Newcastle saw the opening of parks, music halls and the emergence of alcohol abuse as a major, and continuing, negative issue. Nonconformity, albeit with strong Anglican support, responded in the 1880s with the **Temperance** movement via temperance hotels, The Hoppings (still Europe's largest travelling fair and still alcohol free), major campaigns against the drink trade and local headquarters of the Band of Hope Union, UK Alliance, Temperance International and the Order of Rechabites. The Rutherford Monument in the Bigg Market, which bears the names of local politicians and Christian leaders, is a memorial to this.

That Nonconformity, at least in terms of Methodism and Roman Catholicism, was deemed as offering a spiritual threat to the progress of the **Established Church** was manifest in a speech by Lord Armstrong (the 1st of the second creation, nephew of the more famous Lord Armstrong of Cragston) when laying the foundation stone of St Silas Church of England in the poverty stricken Byker and Ouseburn areas in 1905;

“It is a very important matter that the spiritual wants of an ever-increasing population should be adequately ministered to, and that we must all be ready to make some sacrifice and to put our hands into our pockets in order that these ever-growing needs be met. If we do not do this, then I am afraid that we in the Church of England will fall behind and our place will be taken by others who display more zeal and determination.”

Members meeting at the Central Station.

Groups of about ten, each with a Group Leader, will leave the Central Station where we turn right to just beyond the main station portico. Have your local authority Senior Citizen bus pass to hand, or purchase a £3.30 day ticket from the driver.

We board buses 10, 11 or 38 and make the 6 minute journey to Westgate Baptist Church.

[The last Group Leader will leave at 10.15 and any members arriving subsequent to 10.15 should make their own way by referring to the above paragraph. You must alight at Gloucester Road – “The second stop after The Big Lamp traffic lights.” Stay at the front of the bus and either the driver or a passenger will inform you of this stop, as “The Big Lamp” is a major road junction.]

In the event of your getting lost or being displaced from your group then ‘phone Nigel McMurray on 07984 706 263. Please use this number on the day of the Outing only.

From the bus stop at the Central Station we look to our left and see the **Roman Catholic Cathedral** (AWN Pugin, 1838; tower by AM Dunn & EJ Hansom, 1872) outside of which is a statue of the Novocastrian Cardinal, Basil Hume. Kindly resist the temptation to visit the Cathedral as this will result in unacceptable delays to our timetable. Whilst awaiting the bus your Guide may have time to point out St Nicholas Cathedral, St John’s the Baptist Church of England, the George Stephenson Memorial, the location of the Newcastle Literary & Philosophical Library (the latter founded by Unitarian Minister, **Rev William Turner**) and Grey’s Monument.

We alight at the junction of Gloucester Road with Westgate Road, cross the road and walk down to the **Westgate Baptist Church** where we join other group members.

10.30-11.20.

Westgate Baptist Church, www.westgatebaptist.org.uk

The church may be accessed from 10.00. Building plans, photographs and memorabilia will be on display. **Ron Wilson**, church historian, will address us from 10.45.

The Baptists can trace their origins back to 1650 but this church (James Cubitt, 1886) is now one of only two Baptist churches remaining in the city. Westgate is one of the successors to a former Baptist church in Bewick Street near the Central Station, whose foundation stone was to be incorporated into Westgate Baptist.

Initially appearing asymmetrical throughout and incorporating oddities and incongruities, it is finally revealed as a dramatic and unusual structure. The exterior exhibits an

unevenly stepped down frontage, mild intersecting tracery, trefoils and the whole is mildly ‘fortified’ with arrow slits. The interior is of two enormous bays and an apse with the organ camouflaged within that apse. The building is more sympathetically interpreted as “the Cubitt strengths ... [of] shape and shade and structure”. The roof beams of church and hall are arranged in complex patterns. The open baptistery is the stunning architectural feature and there is fine stained glass including modern (2009) glass. There was much internal remodelling in 1990 and since.

At 11.20 we should leave with our Group Leaders for the downhill walk to the Prudhoe Street Mission. On our right is;

Westgate Hill General Cemetery

<http://newcastlephotos.blogspot.com/2009/05/westgate-hill-cemetery.html>

There is no intention to enter the Cemetery but it is noteworthy in being one of four **Nonconformist cemeteries** in Newcastle. The others are Ballast Hills and two in Jesmond, but they are distant from here. All four (the “Consecrated” and “Unconsecrated” sections of the Jesmond cemeteries are still clearly demarcated as such at their entrances today!) were the last resting places of Huguenots, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians and Friends. Intended as private cemeteries for anyone, they became Nonconformist by default in that their grounds were never consecrated.

Westgate Hill (John & Benjamin Green, 1829) was built as a private cemetery open to all religious groups and is considered to be one of the first ten private cemeteries in England. Its occupants include **Henry Angus** (first Baptist mayor of Newcastle) and Corsair, a young Ioway [from Iowa] Native American who died in 1845 during a visit to Newcastle by a war dancing troupe! It is triangular in shape and walled; only the wall that we pass has columns and a grand entrance. This once fine necropolis is now frequently inhabited by Newcastle’s living dead of drug users and alcoholics.

11.30-12.15.

Prudhoe Street Mission, www.prudhoestreetmission.co.uk

We will be addressed by **Pastors Tom and Miriam Leighton.**

This Grade II listed building, in a ‘Free’ Art Nouveau style, has always been known as **Westgate Hall** (Crouch & Butler. 1902), which name is carved above its main entrance which, oddly, is in a side street (Corporation Street). Triangular in shape, it has an octagonal domed tower; its spectacular ‘front’ with four enormous windows is on Westgate Road. It was Methodism’s only **Central Hall** in Newcastle. Constructed in 1902, it still dominates the main entrance to the city from the west and was strategically placed at The Big Lamp – an enormous gas lamp that was a Newcastle landmark. The name is still in use though the lamp has long since disappeared!

The Hall became the head of a new Methodist circuit and was largely funded from the adjacent Brunswick, Elswick and Dilston Road Circuits. Its purpose is evident; it was to be a foil to the monumental St Matthew Church of England (1880; still extant), which

served the *hoi polloi* of rich Elswick, whereas the Hall and its circuit would serve the ‘slummies’ who lived cheek by jowl with the *hoi polloi*.

It is of the classic central hall construction of worship area upstairs with commercial premises below, the latter providing rental income for the hall’s upkeep. Unusually, the worship area (now minus organ and tip-up seats) is orientated at right angles to the norm, i.e. it is shallow and wide. Redecorated in its original lively colours, it has a stunning interior. There is no stained glass here; it was not deemed appropriate for the clientele it hoped to attract.

The original **Prudhoe Street Mission** (1910) was an evangelical mission with strong social outreach in the heart of the city whose patrons were Methodist businessmen. Its first pastor was George “Daddy” Bowran. Major redevelopment of the area in the 1970s resulted in the loss of the original building though the actual street that is Prudhoe Street still remains in a truncated form. Methodism vacated Westgate Hall in 1974 and the Prudhoe Street Mission transferred to the Westgate Hall premises days later. It has, perhaps confusingly, retained the name of Prudhoe Street Mission though it is 1 mile from Prudhoe Street.

We leave Westgate Hall by 12.15 with our Group Leaders and walk the few metres up the road to the bus stop. (The buses into town will be busy at this time of day; stay with your Leader.)

From here we take the 10, 11 or 38 bus for the 9 minute journey to Pilgrim Street. During the journey it is hoped to point out the following buildings of interest though a full bus will almost definitely preclude this: the former **Salvation Army Citadel**, a section of the medieval city walls, St John the Baptist Church of England and the **Rutherford Temperance Monument**.

We alight in Pilgrim Street and walk the short distance to Brunswick Methodist Church via High Friar Lane. Here the city is at its finest and liveliest as we note Grey Street, Grey’s Monument and The Theatre Royal. Healing and open air worship conducted by today’s Nonconformists is probably being offered around Grey’s Monument.

12.45-2.00.

Brunswick Methodist Church, www.brunswickmethodist.org.uk

Our hosts will be **Derrick Appleyard** and **Ken Medd** of Brunswick who will be available throughout for consultation. **Rev Eden Fletcher** hopes to be present.

Three activities are scheduled here and they may be carried out simultaneously by different members over the one and a half hour period. Members may wish to avail themselves of the facilities at this venue. **Lunch** may be partaken of by some in the church hall whilst, at the same time, others may look around the **church**, and a third group may check out the **Wesleyana in the Wesley Room**.

Here will be seen the original Elizabethan land document for **The Orphan House**. Also architectural details of **The Orphan House**, “the headquarters of Methodism in the north”, which was Wesley’s first building in the town and was multipurpose on the lines of The New Room in Bristol. It was opened by Wesley in 1743 and was the usual busy

Methodist complex of chapel, rooms for the instruction of poor children, class and band rooms, with top floor apartments for visiting preachers. It was demolished in 1857 and was replaced by a Wesleyan Day School which is also no longer extant.

Brunswick Methodist Church (George Spoor, 1820) is the successor to The Orphan House. It is a bland brick structure from the exterior with a five-bay front, with one of those bays annoyingly hidden by auxiliary premises. Its interior was “handsome and commodious” which description still applies to the upstairs worship area (a floor was inserted in 1983 at gallery level) though the delicate stucco ceiling is not original, that having been destroyed by fire in 1940. The Duke of Northumberland contributed to the building of Brunswick and some small country chapels as the name “Brunswick” had assured him of the loyalty of the Methodists to the Crown.

Newcastle citizens of merit linked with Brunswick included **Emerson Muschamp Bainbridge** (draper considered to have conceived the department store), **John James Fenwick** (high class draper), **Thomas Bowman Stephenson** (founder of the National Children’s Home), **Richard Grainger** (architect) and **Henry Perlee Parker** (artist).

It is important to leave with Group Leaders at 2.00 as we are limited to 30 minutes at our next destination. The town will be busy and you are advised to stay close to your Group Leader. We walk 500 metres to the Trinity Building of Northumbria University.

This walk is of great interest and we will exit via the unpretentious **Brunswick Place** which, in its day, has housed a Wesleyan Book Depot, the Brunswick manse, a Dental Hospital, a **Christian Science** Reading Room, the Northumberland Institution for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the North of England and the home of Henry Perlee Parker.

We turn left into Northumberland Street and pass **Lisle Street** on our right (although this is a modern version of the street) where Wesley stayed whilst in Newcastle and which housed the **Swedenborgian Church**. In Northumberland Street we note **The Orphan House** plaque. We enter Saville Row and cross John Dobson Street into North Street and then College Street. Turning into Northumberland Road, we note the **Sutherland Building**, the former Durham University College of Medicine funded by **Sir Arthur Munro Sutherland**, the Wesleyan Methodist ship-builder and philanthropist. We also note **Burt Hall**, former Headquarters of the Northumberland Miners Association; this is named after **Thomas Burt**, the Primitive Methodist MP who was its General Secretary, the first working-class MP and father of the House of Commons.

2.30-3.

The former Trinity Presbyterian Church of England.

Former Session Clerk **Donald Williamson** will greet us with his presence, historical knowledge and memories and we will be able to continue to talk to him later on at a more leisurely pace at St James URC.

The church was the location of about one in four of the General Assemblies of the former Presbyterian Church of England. However, the church building (Marshall & Dick, 1885)

has, since 1970, been the Trinity Building of Northumbria University, which has kindly allowed us free access for the strictly limited period shown above. Sadly, given that only Minutes of Meetings books remain, no archival material will be on display. It is a dour, unpretentious, mildly buttressed structure with a bell tower and is Perpendicular in style.

A shallow ogee arch sits atop the six-light window above the main entrance, and simple ogee tracery elements in the other windows constitutes what little decoration there is. The carved motif above the main entrance is perhaps the English rose within the burning bush (symbol of the Church of Scotland), which is most appropriate for a Presbyterian Church of England. There are very extensive plain stone buildings attached to the rear. Almost our sole purpose here is to study the **stained glass** (Atkinson Bros. and J Baguley & Son), given that the interior has been entirely refurbished into a student working area.

Stained glass as a pictorial art form can reasonably be traced back to nearby Monkwearmouth in the time of Bede and has a long history in York and the North East. The work of three nationally significant groups of Novocastrian artists (Atkinson, Baguley and William Wailes) can be noted throughout this Outing. The Reformers either neglected or destroyed stained glass as being representative of the unnecessary imagery of Catholicism. Therefore, it remains a long standing anomaly that a Reformed church such as this and other affluent Nonconformist churches had no qualms in adopting it as a major decorative feature.

We perambulate the 100 metres to our next venue noting the plaque, in Ellison Place, commemorating the birthplace of the late **Cardinal Basil Hume**. There will be a brief opportunity to view the “Good Samaritan” stained glass window in the Ellison Building of Northumbria University; originally in the former Bath Lane Congregational Church, it is in memory of the **Rev John Hunter Rutherford** – evangelist, temperance leader, physician and educationalist.

3.15-4.15.

Church of the Divine Unity

<http://www.communigate.co.uk/ne/thechurchofthedivineunity/>

Ron Coulson, a member of the congregation, will be our guide and will put on display the original coloured plans and some memorabilia.

The church (Cackett, Burns, Dick & Mackellar. 1940) is probably the last Art Deco building in the UK, in a city with many examples of this style. The plans were drawn up by J.R. Siddell, a member of the congregation who acted as Clerk of the Works to the architects whose offices were adjacent to the church in Ellison Place. The exterior is starkly simple in brick with two shallow cornices and tall narrow windows, a tower and a four-columned portico. The interior is less restrained with its gallery, pulpit, lectern, choir stalls, communion table, organ and linear patterned ceiling forming a coherent whole. Green and red pastel shades of textured ‘cathedral glass’ offer a stark contrast to the rich portrait glass experienced in the other churches visited on this Outing.

We retrace our steps to Northumberland Road.

4.30-6.15**St James United Reformed Church.**

http://www.urc-northernsynod.org/church/st_james.htm

We will be welcomed by **Rev James Breslin** and **Mary Dowse** who will escort us on a detailed tour.

This is the oldest Free Church in Newcastle. Originally a Congregational Church (T. Lewis Banks, 1882-4), it is tall and compactly cruciform in shape on a ground plan which is four squares square. It is the third building occupied by St James Church, whose origin goes back to a Congregational group first licensed in 1672. It has a significant overseas missionary heritage. This, the finest extant Nonconformist church in Newcastle, is of the Early English style with tower, lantern and spire along with a few incongruous flying buttresses. Attached shafts, small decorative turrets and intriguing pedimental sculptures are to be noted. There is fine stained glass by the Newcastle firms of Atkinson, Baguley and Wailes and also the Nonconformist firm of **Heaton, Butler & Bayne**. There are extensive ancillary premises to the rear.

A fine Chapel Tea will then be provided. **Our Outing concludes here at 6.15.**

A five minute walk takes us to the bus stop from where buses 1, 10, 11 and 38 go direct to the Central Station (10 minutes) and 10, 11, and 38 go direct to Westgate Baptist Church (16 minutes) should you have parked your vehicle at Westgate Baptist.

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