THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

Newsletter 49 January 2012

The chapel at Stonor
(photograph copyright Colin Baxter)

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ADDRESS BOOK

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NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

2 March 2012	Conference at Carr's Lane U.R.C. Centre, Birmingham 'Sitting in Chapel' 10.00–16.00
14 April 2012	Stourbridge and Kidderminster visit (David Watts and Chris Wakeling)
7 July 2012	North-west London visit (Andrew Worth) and AGM
22 September 2012	Harrogate and Nidderdale visit (David Quick)

EDITORIAL

We now have a full programme of visits organised for this year as you will see above. Tim Grass, our Visits Secretary, would particularly like to receive proposals from members for visits for 2013. He notes that the Society has not been to East Anglia or the North West in recent years and would welcome suggestions. If members are wary of the work involved, it may be possible to twin a local member with an experienced visits organiser in order to spread the load and share experience. Contact Tim Grass (details above) with ideas in the first instance.

PROCEEDINGS

VISIT TO HENLEY AND THE SOUTH CHILTERNS – 1 OCTOBER 2011

> *Churches and chapels often rank amongst the principal objects of interest in a town. Set apart from profane and common uses, these buildings are, to their frequenters, sacred places, suggestive of touching emotions, and happy recollections; while to the stranger they are an index to the people's inner and higher life.*

On a warm, sunny day in October, members of the Chapels Society were given ample opportunity to explore these sentiments so eloquently expressed by John B. Jones in his *Sketches of Reading* (1870).

On the way from Reading Railway Station to the first venue, those with time to spare were able to view what had been until 1983 Broad Street Independent Chapel. Behind the street frontage of 1892, the interior of the chapel, rebuilt in 1800, now serves as Waterstone's bookshop. Retaining its galleries and domed ceiling, the chapel has, whilst being adapted to accommodate Waterstone's usual house style, kept much of its spatial integrity and character. Even the stained glass window of Holman Hunt's 'Light of the World' does not seem entirely out of place.

The group assembled for the formal start at St Mary's Chapel, Castle Street, where John Dearing outlined the history of that chapel and in particular the church planting activities of one of its most energetic ministers, the Revd James Sherman, two of whose chapels were to be visited in the course of the day.

St Mary's Chapel was built and opened in 1798 for an evangelical congregation which had separated from St Giles' parish the previous year on the

The interior of St Mary's Chapel, Reading
(photograph copyright Colin Baxter)

appointment of an unsympathetic vicar. Designed by Richard Billings, the interior remains largely intact, with marbled Doric and Ionic columns supporting galleries and a tunnel-vaulted ceiling. Box pews provide seating for 1000 hearers. Subsequent embellishments include two rare pendant gas 'star lights', each with 36 burners. In 1836, the originally modest exterior was transformed by local architects, Henry and Nathaniel Briant, by the addition of a grand Corinthian portico in the Greek Revival style.

At first the chapel was largely served by members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, most notably James Sherman. Following his departure in 1836, the building was licensed as St Mary's Episcopal Chapel. Those who disapproved of the return to the Anglican fold formed another Independent congregation, which, in 1837, built themselves a new chapel, by J. J. Cooper, immediately opposite. This has now been put to 'profane and common uses' as a night club, appropriately named 'Dogma'. At St Mary's, the decision by the Church of England to ordain women was a step too far for minister and congregation, who withdrew to join the Church of England (Continuing), earning them the soubriquet 'the Anglican Taliban'.

From Reading the party set off by coach for a tour that was to take it down some interesting by-ways, both literally and metaphorically. There was a tantalizing glimpse of South Street Baptist Chapel, 1875–7 by Alfred Waterhouse, before arriving at the first port of call, Caversham Hill. Here, in 1827, James Sherman had built, in his words, 'a neat structure of bath stone with a tower and a bell' in, as all his chapels, a simple Gothic style. His inspiration may have been the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel in Bath, where he had ministered briefly before coming to Reading. However, his chapels are more Toytown Gothic than Strawberry Hill. The chapel, now used as the hall, is painted white without and Day-Glo orange within.

From there, through rural suburbia and over the border into Oxfordshire, next to be visited was Stoke Row Independent Chapel. A brick inscribed 'W.G. 1815' high on the east wall indicated the date and builder, William Giles. Built at a cost of £350 and opened 6 August 1816, the chapel is a simple brick structure with a hipped slate roof and round headed windows surrounded on three sides by a burial ground. Generous endowment by local farmer William Brazil in the 1950s has

Stoke Row Independent Chapel (photograph copyright Colin Baxter)

ensured a regular ministry and funds for such fittings as the Walker organ (dated 1965) installed in 2003.

Thence past the famous Maharajah's well, it was on to Stonor Park, home of the Catholic Stonor family from about 1100. The house is located in a remote valley, encircled by beech woods and built up against the hillside — 'clyminge on a hill' according to Leland in 1535/40. There, Georgina Stonor gave us the benefit of her extensive research into her family's heroic Catholic past and the history of their private chapel.

The flint and stone chapel, which adjoins the east wing of the house, was first recorded in 1331, but is thought to date from the 13th century and to be built on even earlier foundations. Between 1796 and 1800, James Thorpe remodelled the interior in the Gothic taste with a plaster ribbed vault on angel corbels, pretty doorways with ogee hood and finials, and stained glass by Francis Eginton of Birmingham. The chapel was redecorated in 1959 in pink, grey and white, with advice from family friends, Osbert Lancaster and John Piper. Modern additions include a memorial tablet to Dame Edith Sitwell and, in the ante-chapel, stations of the cross carved out of wooden Red Cross boxes by Jozef Janas, a Polish prisoner of war.

Lunch was taken at the Friends' Meeting House in Henley. Built in 1894, this forms part of a range of buildings in which the Society of Friends have been meeting since *c.* 1668. The late Victorian institutional look of the present building, decorative brick with terracotta panels, reflects its original intended use as both meeting house and adult school.

After lunch, it was out into the countryside again. The intended approach being blocked by parked cars, Pheasants' Hill U.R.C. (formerly Congregational) was finally reached on foot. Salem Chapel was registered on 8 September 1807 for a congregation described in 1818 as Calvinistic Methodist. Refenestrated and refitted in the late 19th century, the chapel nonetheless retains that patina of age and atmosphere which injudicious modernisation and refurbishment could destroy in an instant.

Back in Henley, there was a brief visit to Market Place Baptist Chapel of 1878, red and silver brick without, gutted and modernised within, and rebranded as 'd: two'. It was then on to Christ Church U.R.C. (formerly Congregational). The

Binfield Heath Chapel (photograph copyright Colin Baxter)

chapel dating from 1908 by Hampden W. Pratt, 'blowsy Gothic in red brick with yellow stone dressings', the flamboyant tower the gift of a local businessman, stands as a potent symbol of the heyday of Nonconformist ascendancy. Edwardian professional and businessmen and their wives would have found the chapel, enriched with art nouveau glass and copper light fittings, entirely to their taste.

After partaking of a splendid tea, it was back on the coach to the final destination of the day, Binfield Heath Chapel. Built in 1835, this was another of Sherman's diminutive Gothic chapels, again with a narrow battlemented tower. A tablet over the door records the donor as Mrs Sarah Adams of Reading, one of the Castle Street congregation. The writer was struck by the similarity between Sherman's chapels and those built in the mid-19th century by John Smedley of Matlock for Wesleyan Reformers. One wonders whether Sherman's chapels, like Smedley's, were designed specifically to accommodate the liturgical aspirations of their patron.

Altogether this was a fascinating excursion into what for many of us was little known territory. Many thanks are due to Chris Skidmore for his excellent programme and to the coach driver who negotiated a far from straightforward route with skill and patience.

John Anderson

TRAVELLING WITH THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

After being a member of the Society for several years, it was a pleasure to finally be able to join one of the visit days. We planned a trip to London this fall to coincide with the Society visit to Reading and Henley-on-Thames. We were extremely pleased with the success of the day in getting us more acquainted with the Society and with English chapel architecture. We were especially fascinated with the Stonor chapel and the Pheasants Hill URC. On other days, on our own, we also visited several very interesting London 'chapels'.

We live in Kansas in the great American Midwest, with a much shorter recorded history. Our small city of Newton was founded in 1871, and here we consider a structure of 100 years quite an antique. But we try to preserve and conserve the resources that we have. I serve on the local Historic Preservation Commission where we have a program of three levels of historic architectural listing (National Register, Kansas Register, and local register). We also try to preserve archaeological resources; and since this was once Indian country, we now have a program to excavate Indian sites.

In America, the distinction between chapel and church is not significant. 'Chapel' here refers generally to a very small building, and all denominations (from Catholics and Anglicans to Quakers and Mennonites) call their worship houses 'churches'. Sometimes the term 'meetinghouse' is used on the East Coast. I am working on some articles on the topic of Mennonites and the adoption of the Gothic style in the 20th century; and I saw parallels to that in chapel architecture in England. Thanks for a great experience.

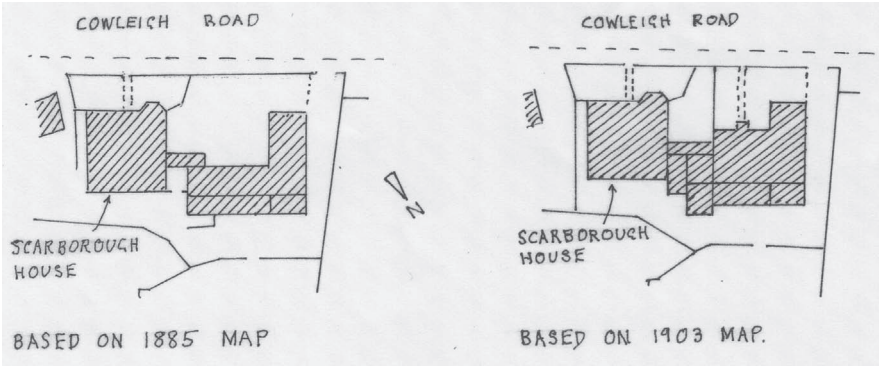
Keith and Aldine Sprunger

GOSPEL HALL, COWLEIGH ROAD, MALVERN, WORCS

AN ARTICLE BY J. E. C. PETERS

Cowleigh Road Gospel Hall in North Malvern is an Open Brethren meeting room lying somewhat to the north of the town centre, a little off the main road to Worcester. It is dated 1894 on the porch, but this is the date of major alterations, not of the original building which had been erected for a different purpose.

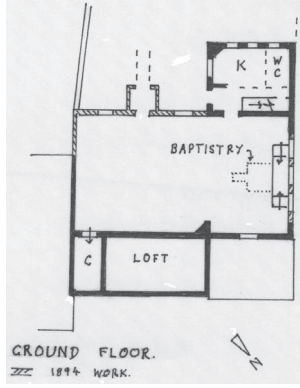
The Brethren cause in Malvern is said to go back to the mid-19th century. An early meeting was formed in Hereford in 1837, from which preachers went out to various places, some at a distance, Great Malvern being noted as one place visited between 1838 and 1840. A Mission House there is recorded in the Hereford records in 1842–3. Whether this then produced a permanent meeting is not apparent. The Brethren divided in 1848 into two branches, open and exclusive, both of which were to be represented in Malvern. The exclusive Brethren appear to be the older in date there, their meeting in Bank Street being recorded in 1873, the first definite reference the writer has found. The 1885 large scale map of the town shows this, and a second meeting at Link Top, in a building in the angle between Worcester and Newtown roads, now Preston's Shop. When this was formed is not clear, but it was probably after 1881, only the Bank Street meeting appearing in the directory of that date. The second meeting appears in directories of 1888 and 1892, but not in 1896, when Cowleigh Road appears instead, indicating that it was the meeting at Link Top which had moved. The background to the foundation of this meeting and the reasons for the move are not known. Both meetings are still extant. The Cowleigh Road meeting room has been owned by the Stewards Trust since at least 1906, this body having been set up some eight years earlier, initially to hold missionary property overseas, but apparently early extended to cover property at home as well, presumably to ensure continuity of ownership and a Brethren use.



The building is set parallel to Cowleigh Road, on a site sloping down from that to the north. It is set back from the road, and so somewhat below it. The building is L-shaped, the short wing two storey, projecting towards the road; the main part is the hall, which is as high as the two storey section. There is an entrance porch in the centre of the exposed side. Behind is a lean-to range, the floor at a lower level, with no internal access. The present building is a conversion and enlargement of an earlier range, the use and ownership of which were connected with Scarborough House next door, on the east. Scarborough House is two to three storeys above the road, with a further one below, exposed at the back. From the local directories this building had appeared by 1868; a map of part of the Hornyold estate of two years later shows it, but nothing to the west where the Gospel Hall now is. The directory records it as a boarding school for boys, run by Mr J. Tyrer. The 1885 map shows an L-shaped range on the site, with the rear lean-to, the main wing markedly narrower than at present. This stopped short of Scarborough House, with a small courtyard in the gap, and a narrow range, presumably a passage, connecting it at the front. No paths are shown in the garden between the range and the road, so access must have been by the narrow range or across the courtyard from the house. As now, a drive went down at the west end of the buildings, giving access to the back of the range, to the rear of Scarborough House, and apparently to the building to the east thereof as well. The range was presumably school rooms.

The last entry in a directory seen by the writer for the school is in 1884; by 1888 Scarborough House was a lodging house run by Miss M. Lane, who had been at 1 Westmoreland Villas four years before. There is no reference to the building in the 1892 directory, but by 1896 Mrs A. Baker was providing apartments. By 1936 Scarborough House had become a private hotel, and had by then or slightly later private, lock-up garages in its grounds.

The school room section seems to have been sold off separately from the house in about 1893, except for its east end; this was linked to the house,



Cowleigh Road Gospel Hall from the south (photograph copyright the author) and on the right the layout of the building

probably at the same time as alterations were made to form the meeting room. The link is shown complete on the 1903 25-inch map, to the same outline as today, although it has been largely re-built in the late 20th century. The east end of the garden between the wing and the road was also retained by Scarborough House.

The original building is of Malvern stone, with Bath stone dressings and a Welsh slate roof, like Scarborough House. In 1894 the main part of the L was widened, with a flat roof to the extension, the front wall of the same materials as the older part, but the east end of the extension and the sides of the porch are blue brick. As the jambs and relieving arches over the three windows in the west wall are also of blue brick, these windows must be part of the 1894 alterations. How the range was originally planned internally is not now apparent, except in the two storey wing; this had a single room upstairs, reported to have been used by the caretaker, with a corner fireplace, with below a kitchen, WC and passage. The spacing of the windows facing the road shows that the provision of two rooms on the ground floor was original. The purpose of the conical lead feature on the roof is not clear, unless it was the base for a bell cote, related to the school. The main part of the range was opened up into one room, but retaining a corner fireplace and chimney on a short stub wall, which project rather oddly part way down one side. The room has a heavy moulded cornice and a dado moulding recessed into the plaster all round; this also extended into the passage in the two storey part. There are two circular fittings in the ceiling above former pendant gas lights. There is a platform at one end, with steps up each side, with in front the baptismal tank with a flight of steps down into it; when not in use this is floored over. As noted above, the windows above the platform appear to be alterations of 1894. A narrow store is reached up a few steps at the other end of the room, set above a WC. It appears that the roof may have been taken off when the alterations were made and then re-fixed; substantial beams will have been needed to support the present arrangement. Looking through an access hatch in the two storey section to the void over the ceiling, no evidence was noted of plaster on the rafters, although the ceiling must have been higher in that part originally, as the gable window partly lights the space above the present ceiling.

At the rear is a double coach house, which is an addition, the gable wall butting against the corner of the main range. Rather higher is a four-stall stable, with loft over, this having a low wall below the eaves. Access to this may have been by a ladder on the back of the front wall, as the writer could see no other means of access, looking through the windows. The WC below the store on the main floor appears to be part of the 1894 alterations, the doorway having blue brick jambs. There is a stone jamb for an earlier door, set slightly to one side, which is only just visible in the angle with the extension added by 1903, connected with Scarborough House.

The hall floor has been renewed, hiding any evidence. Heating of the hall was probably by stoves; as noted, a corner fireplace, or rather its flue, was retained but there is no evidence of a fireplace here, the dado rail and skirting running through. The flue pipe could have gone into the chimney, however. A gas miser with a flue is reported to have stood by the door from the hall to the two storey section, but whether this replaced a second stove is not apparent. The kitchen

and WC have been rearranged fairly recently and the wooden windows largely replaced.

Three other Brethren meetings appeared in the Malvern area in the early 20th century, two at least connected with Cowleigh Road and probably mission stations. The third was at Assarts to the south of the town, first mentioned in the 1901 street directory, services reduced by 1916; it had ceased to be recorded by 1922. The other two both first appeared in the 1914 directory. That at Somers Park Avenue was the least successful; services were being reduced by 1920. The building was sold to the Methodists in 1927 and moved by them the following year to their nearby chapel for use as a Sunday School (it appears to have been a pre-fabricated timber structure). The Old Elm Gospel Hall in Barnards Green lasted rather longer, services still proceeding in 1933, but it was not included in the 1936 directory.

A Brethren boarding school for girls was opened at Clarendon, further along Cowleigh Road, in 1898 by three sisters, the Misses Flint. The girls went twice on Sunday to the Brethren meeting in Bank Street. However, after Miss Swain took over in 1930 two further places were added for Sunday services, the nearby Holy Trinity Anglican church, and Cowleigh Road Gospel Hall. In 1948 the school moved to Kinmel Park in north Wales. With the school, the meeting also lost Mr Harold St John, a noted leader and bible teacher.

The writer is indebted to Mr B. Deacon for access to the building and information thereon, to Mr B. Iles for access to the 1885 map and a history of Clarendon School; the directories were mainly consulted in Malvern Library. The Origins of the Brethren *by Harold H. Rowdon (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1967),* Gathering to his Name *by Tim Grass (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), and* Dissenters All *by R. A. Ellis (2008) were also consulted.*

NEWS

The new Chapels Society website

Our new website is now up and running at www.chapelssociety.org.uk and members should use this for the latest information about Chapels Society events, visits and other information.

Sitting in Chapel

You will have received, in a recent mailing, details of this Chapels Society conference to be held on Friday 2 March at Carr's Lane U.R.C. Centre, Birmingham. This, our second conference, focusses on aspects of seating in Nonconformist places of worship. Further details and the application form are available on the website and bookings are required before 27 January.

Association of Denominational History Societies and Cognate Libraries (ADHSCL)

At the recent ADHSCL AGM, Chapels Society member Andrew Worth was elected as the fourth convenor of the group, which has since 1993 encouraged

contacts between denominational societies and others and held conferences and an annual lecture. ADHSCL are currently looking for a new Treasurer and any member feeling they might offer this service can contact the secretary at secretary@adhscl.org.uk to find out more.

Scrap metal theft

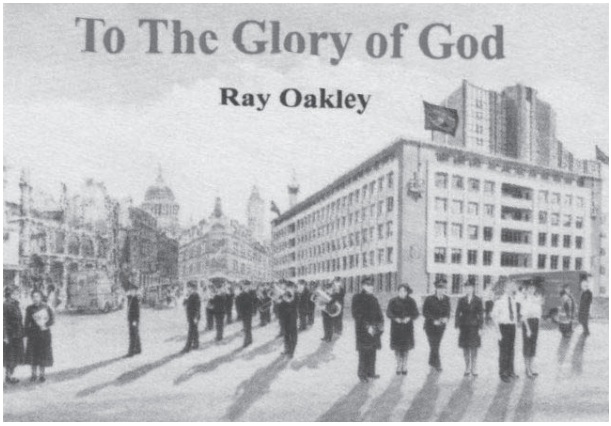
This is an increasing problem for chapels amongst others. A proposal to amend the Scrap Metal Merchants Act 1964 to prohibit cash transactions and making payment through a bank compulsory would improve the audit trail within the trade and make stolen metal more easily traceable. A petition to this effect is on the government e-petition site at http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/406 and members are encouraged to consider signing it.

Architectural books for sale

Nicholas Hopkins writes that he must dispose of the majority of his late father's extensive library of books on architecture. Douglass Hopkins was a priest in the Peterborough Diocese and his books are catalogued and available for sale at http://ukbooklink.com/rvb6sq.

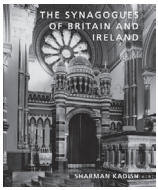
To the Glory of God

We have recently received a review copy of this splendid new illustrated book on the history of the Salvation Army as expressed, illustrated and symbolised by its buildings. It has been written by Ray Oakley, a former architect to the Salvation Army. We shall be carrying a review in the next issue of the *Newsletter* but members may be interested to purchase a copy at £20 plus £4.95 p&p from Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 66–78 Denington Road, Wellingborough NN8 2QH (Tel: 01933 445445).



BOOK REVIEWS

The Synagogues of Britain and Ireland by Sharman Kadish. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011. 398 pp, hardback. ISBN 978-0-300-17051-1. £45.



Chapels Society member Sharman Kadish's new book can confidently be recommended to anyone with an interest in the architecture and history of places of worship in the British Isles. Members may already be familiar with some of her previous publications on this and related themes. The substantial volume she edited in 1996, *Building Jerusalem: Jewish Architecture in Britain* covered some of the same ground, though it went wider, covering also cemetery architecture, social architecture, and so forth. More recently (2006), English Heritage published her slimmer but very attractively produced *Jewish Heritage in England: An Architectural Guide*. This too went wider, though it dealt principally with synagogues. Does the volume under review here, with its more specific focus, add significantly to these two? And can it be recommended to someone with little prior interest in or knowledge of the subject? The answer to both is 'yes'. It is a very full, but always readable, compendium, superbly produced.

The excellence of the photographs and drawings alone, a high proportion in colour, make it a highly desirable volume. The author, who is Director of Jewish Heritage UK, has been able to call on the services of English Heritage's photographic unit and others for a stunning collection of photographs, beautifully reproduced. The Consultant Architect to Jewish Heritage UK, Barbara Bowman, takes the credit for a series of very clear and informative drawings. Anyone unfamiliar with the richness of synagogue architecture and decoration in this country — and the chapter on stained glass is a real eye-opener — will be readily drawn in by the sheer range and quality illustrated here.

The text is of comparable quality. Kadish gives us a detailed tour of the influences and edifices of successive eras, starting with the first decades after the Resettlement in 1656, through the Georgian and Victorian periods and twentieth century up to the current day. The buildings themselves, the builders and architects (initially none of them Jewish, perhaps because of guild restrictions, though this began to change in the early 19th century when the likes of George Basevi and David Mocatta came on the scene), the liturgical trends, the wider artistic and political movements: all are drawn into a broad narrative sweep that crisscrosses the globe, whilst never losing its essential focus. The passage on Canterbury Synagogue, for example, noting that it is the sole example in Britain of an Egyptian Revival synagogue, treats us to a discussion of other examples on the continent and in the New World before turning to the only other surviving example of thoroughgoing Egyptian style in synagogue architecture anywhere in the world, which is in Hobart, Tasmania. Its architect, James Alexander Thomson, had been transported from the Medway in 1825 for robbery, but the move was apparently the making of him: he became a pillar of the Australian establishment. We are left to ponder whether the Kent connection is anything more than coincidence, but the story is good.

In her introduction, the author says, 'It has not been my intention in the British context to treat the synagogue as some kind of variant church that merely begs comparison with the buildings of the various Christian denominations. As a Jew, this is not my task. If this book leads... others, more qualified than I, to undertake such comparative study then I shall consider my job well done.' Do not suppose from this that she avoids the subject. There are many comparisons throughout the book with Christian architecture, particularly Nonconformist and Roman Catholic, whether in the broad currents of style, in architectural detailing or in technical matters such as lighting and acoustical properties. Some Chapels Society members will particularly appreciate the passage on 'tin tabernacle' synagogues. All these are handled sensitively and knowledgeably, and add to the impression of an account well-grounded in its wider context. The book would serve as an excellent starting point for the sort of more detailed comparative study that Kadish disclaims her own book to be.

The book does not pretend to cover all synagogue buildings in the British Isles exhaustively. It does not deal with what is known of mediaeval synagogues. It does not list every last, here-today, gone-tomorrow meeting room. Scotland, Wales and Ireland are covered, if perhaps in slightly less depth than England, although there appears to be no reference to the Channel Islands (where there was a synagogue as early as 1843) or the Isle of Man (which has had a Jewish presence since the first half of the nineteenth century, but perhaps not a synagogue as such). Nor does it attempt to list every last synagogue that has since been converted into a chapel, a mosque, or some kind of temple to Mammon. This is as it should be: the book is not intended to be encyclopaedic.

This reviewer found very little to quarrel with in any of the detail, with the possible exception of some of the demographic data. Understandably, the author relies here on secondary sources, some of them not fully reliable. For example, the 2,000 that is often quoted, and repeated here, for Liverpool's population in the mid-nineteenth century is not supported by census studies, and is also called into question by its historian, Philip Ettinger's assertion that the plans for the new Hope Place synagogue, seating 800, 'which when completed would possibly be large enough to accommodate the then entire Jewish population of the City, was causing much alarm to those in authority in Seel Street'. But these are minor matters: readers will be more interested in the architectural history, on which Sharman Kadish has taken over Edward Jamilly's mantle as the leading authority.

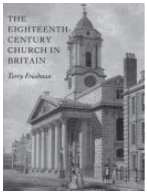
The book is written in a fluent and engaging style. It explains as they arise, clearly but lightly, the various Jewish concepts and Hebrew expressions that inevitably form part of the narrative. It contains a useful appendix listing the architects of all the British synagogues described, another interesting one on street names that appear to attest to a Jewish presence, a glossary, extensive endnotes and a substantial and well-structured bibliography.

Anyone in the Chapels Society would enjoy this book, which would sit well alongside David Butler's *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* and Christopher Stell's *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses* volumes. Anyone organising a Chapels Society visit should get a copy. Even if, sadly, many of the buildings will not be open to visitors on the Society's favoured day for visits,

Saturdays, there is a wealth of material here for background notes, which, together with the illustrations, will make many of us wish that visits could be organised on another day of the week!

Petra Laidlaw

The Eighteenth-Century Church in Britain by Terry Friedman. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011. xv+790 pp, 739 illustrations, hardback with CD. ISBN 978-0-300-15908-0. £60.



This superbly produced book is the fruit of more than thirty years research by Terry Friedman, the leading historian of British eighteenth-century church architecture. It will be the standard work on the subject for many years, and even at £60 is something of a bargain for it contains so much information.

No one can now claim that the eighteenth century was an age of unbelief, in which building churches worthy of Christian worship, and maintaining and improving churches was neglected. Friedman reckons that 629 new churches were built, and that few medieval churches escaped the 'improver's' hand during the century. Most medieval churches were 'Geogianised', but the evidence has mostly been removed by subsequent 'Victorianisation'. Visiting churches was apparently a popular eighteenth-century activity. Existing or new churches were often the focus of new building developments.

Dr Friedman's detailed knowledge of the archives and contemporary published accounts of church buildings is the book's great strength. This enables him to analyse the intentions of the designers and builders, and to provide a taxonomy of designs. He demonstrates the sympathetic interest of eighteenth-century architects and patrons in gothic buildings and design, and their capacity to both build convincing gothic buildings, and to adapt gothic design to innovative planning, or hybridise gothic to baroque. He discusses in detail Hawksmoor's work at Beverley Minster and Westminster Abbey, and other architect's major restorations of numerous other cathedrals. He identifies and discusses the movement to build churches designed after the 'primitive Christian model' based on the basilica plan, exemplified in John Wood the Elder's rebuilding Llandaff Cathedral on the site of what he thought was an early Christian basilica. In the early eighteenth century the temple form emerged, most triumphantly at St Martin-in-the-Fields in the 1720s, but also in Palladian style buildings, as at St Giles-in-the-Fields. He shows that the Wren tradition continued long after his death, and notes a willingness to experiment in church planning, with circular, elliptical and octagonal buildings.

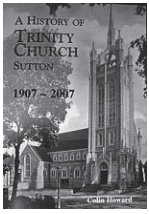
Dr Friedman suggests that kinship networks of patrons, builders, tradesmen, as well as publications of architects' plans and drawings, were highly influential in spreading ideas, in North America, as well as in Britain.

In addition to the text and splendid illustrations, the book comes with a CD providing extracts from archives and contemporary authors, as well as modern references, for 207 churches, including five dissenting meeting houses, and one synagogue.

Despite the major contribution it makes to the understanding of eighteenth-century attitudes to church buildings, this volume does have some limitations. There is little about the liturgical use of church buildings, which was highly significant for their planning and layout, or about their furnishings and the contemporary social context, or their relationship to contemporary design and architecture. Most disappointing for members of the Chapels Society, Dr Friedman has little to say about meeting houses. They are dealt with in four pages, Roman Catholic chapels in eight pages and synagogues in two pages. There is still an opening for a major book on eighteenth-century meeting houses and chapels.

W. M. Jacob

A History of Trinity Church, Sutton 1907–2007 by Colin Howard. 2009. 136pp inc photographs, paperback. Published by the author, printed by J. H. Brookes Ltd, Hanley and available via the church website www.trinity-churchsutton.org.uk. £11.50 (including postage and packing).



The history of any faith community can be wide-ranging and full of interest. When the community in question is formed from the coming together of two different denominations, both of which are also the result of the uniting of smaller groupings the story becomes much more involved. Any author has to decide where to draw the limits in order to produce a book that is of a sensible size and that appeals to the widest possible audience. The bulk of the text here is concerned with the Wesleyan (later Methodist) congregation who were initially responsible for the 1907 building which is now home to Trinity United Reformed / Methodist Church.

There is an opening chapter devoted to the earlier history of the Wesleyan congregation. It also gives a short introduction to the Methodist movement in general. Further on is a short history of Sutton Congregational Church, later to become United Reformed. There are also chapters on the wider ecumenical developments and aspirations of which Trinity has been so much a part.

The church building (can it really be called a chapel?) is a very striking structure. The main church is part of a larger complex of buildings. The Kent ragstone exterior is topped with a crown and lantern spire. There are references in the book to stained glass, a large organ and a carillon and war memorials. Some of these features can be seen within photographs over 16 pages. I would have liked to have seen a few more close-up photographs of them. The Revd J. S. Simon, President of the Wesleyan Conference in 1907, at the opening service, 'spoke of his regret that Methodism often lacked a sense of reverence and thought this might be attributed to the poor quality of some of their church buildings. Making a comparison with the reverential feelings he felt were part of the Roman Catholic experience in their churches, he hoped that this new building would also add an element of reverence and the closeness of Christ in those who worshipped there.'

There is much of interest about the life of the church. Meetings for worship, educational and social activities are described. Significant events in the history of the church are documented and many individuals are mentioned. There is an attempt to set the church within the context of the wider community. A wide range of music has been a part of the life of the church throughout its history. According to the words of the Minister, Martin Camroux, '. . .Trinity is perhaps unusual not simply in its building. How many Nonconformist churches are there today in which a choral Eucharist or choral evensong may still sometimes be found?' The book also features verse about the church written by well-known hymn-writer and former minister of Trinity, the Revd Fred Pratt Green.

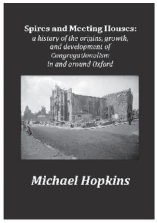
This is a well researched and thorough history of a large and vibrant congregation. As the title would suggest the focus is as much on the whole church as on the building. It is highly readable and well produced. The photographs provide a snapshot of the church's history and activity as well as all the buildings past and present.

I would have welcomed a little more about the Congregational Church and a guide to interesting features in the building would have made this even more comprehensive. Perhaps there is a publication available from the church that already does this?

After reading the book I looked at the church website. Included in the 'building' section is a panoramic tour.

Stephen Page

Spires and Meeting Houses: A History of the Origins, Growth and Development of Congregationalism in and around Oxford by Michael Hopkins. Milton Keynes: John Owen Press, 2011. iii + 227pp, paperback. ISBN 978-0-9568312-0-0. £10.00



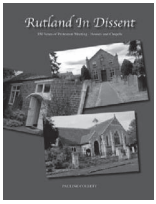
Despite the pervasive Anglicanism of the city and the ancient university, Nonconformity has had a presence in Oxford since at least the mid-seventeenth century. In this useful study, developed from a Birmingham M.Phil. thesis, Michael Hopkins maps the development of Congregationalism in and around Oxford, from the radicals in the Parliamentarian army and the Independents among the university's puritan dons to the dwindling of the United Reformed Church at the turn of the twenty-first century. After a scene-setting introduction and a chapter on the extraordinarily open-minded Baptist-Presbyterian cause meeting at New Road Chapel, Hopkins turns to the Congregationalists proper, devoting space in turn to George Street (1832–1933), Summertown (1844), Cowley Road (1869–1962), Temple Cowley (1878), Old Marston (1884–1922), Marston Road (1885), Wheatley (1841), Frilford (1841–1994), Longworth (1848–1996), Appleton (1830–1973), Cumnor (1845) and Collinwood Road (1945). Involvement in the Blackbird Leys 'area of ecumenical experiment' rounds off the story, and a concluding chapter draws interesting comparisons with other cities, especially with Cambridge.

Michael Hopkins is at pains to emphasise the uniqueness of Oxford, noting the unusual combination of market town, university and industrial centre (Betjeman's Motopolis). He argues that for Congregationalism the interplay between George Street Chapel and Mansfield College (founded in 1886) was also determinative. In Cambridge, ministry to town and gown was brought together in the stately edifice of Emmanuel Church: in Oxford, George Street missed the opportunity to reach out to the university, leaving Mansfield to become the intellectual power-house of Congregationalism, but as a college chapel, rather than a church. In Hopkins' view, George Street dissipated its energies planting new churches in the expanding eastern suburbs of the city, before allowing itself to be rendered homeless by the local planning authority in the 1930s. Thereafter, the financial resources of the George Street Trust facilitated development and ministry elsewhere in the city with a generosity which was not always wisely directed. Meanwhile, Mansfield students supplied the pulpits of local churches, and its chapel offered a centre of excellence to a large gathered congregation, until the advent of the United Reformed Church led to a joining of Sunday morning forces with the Presbyterians at St Columba's.

Spires and Meeting Houses builds on an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary materials, and its author is to be congratulated on telling a sometimes convoluted tale with insight and clarity. The cover illustration of George Street Chapel is evocative; more photographs or plans would have been particularly welcome to members of the Chapels Society; and a map of the city and neighbourhood would have been still more helpful to the reader unfamiliar with Oxford and its suburbs. For a tradition which prizes the priesthood of all believers, the amount of space devoted to the biographies and activities of the ministers was particularly striking, and this reviewer wondered whether use of the *Oxford and District Free Churches' Magazine* might have filled out the story of local church life, in the manner of Charles Cashdollar's *A Spiritual Home*. There is more work to be done, not least on the wider Free Church and religious scene, but this is a very welcome study.

Martin Wellings

Rutland In Dissent by Pauline Collett. Stamford: Spiegl Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-902544-67-3. £14.95



The Chapels Society included a day tour of Rutland in its July 2009 programme, and those who took part will remember an idyllic drive through tranquil villages and bosky dells, tracing modest chapels huddled alongside stone cottages, where the dominant buildings might be the Manor House and the Parish Church. These villages and the two small towns of Oakham and Uppingham, conceal traces, historical, sectarian, theological and sociological of a Nonconformist past of some passion and energy, and only recently, with the exception of Professor David Thompson's admirable doctoral thesis of 1968, has this area received any scholarly attention.

Pauline Collett, who lives in the county, and whose book is the fruit of researches collected over many years, divides her book into two parts. It is to the second part that a Rutland reader in local bookshop or library will turn first. It is in effect a gazetteer of 123 traceable dissenting chapels, or 'causes' in the county. A painstaking trawl through denominational archives, village histories, local maps, land registry records and church history has enabled her to write a detailed and in some cases minute description of each building as it is now, or far more often, as it was in its heyday as a place of worship. She notes architectural details, ecclesiastical furnishing, date of opening and, as so often happens in this field, date of closure. The often quoted Religious Census of 1851 enables her to gauge likely attendance, in many cases not simply from one Sunday to the next but also from one service to the next, and to include Sunday School figures. If, as some Chapels Society members are aware, a tour reveals the presence of these buildings as well as their documentary history, the sense is not so much that of 'bare ruin'd choirs' as of dignified village buildings, which once had a noble purpose within their communities, now cast aside, transformed at best, sometimes sensitively, sometimes with reprehensible taste, into dwellings, and at worst into garages and store houses, so showing the English countryside at its makeshift worst.

Pauline Collett's first section addresses a rather different audience, those who, having lost their bearings, indeed their spiritual coding, seek explanation of English Nonconformist polity. In venturing into the morass of origins and creeds of dissenters, she moves where angels fear to tread. Her text may well enlighten those who have tacit questions about the historical and theological differences of non-Anglican Protestant churches, but in so doing might be attempting more than space can provide. Weightier tomes are required to elucidate some of her themes. It is easy to be misled by nomenclature. If names have remained in the vocabulary for five hundred years, their definitions have varied. Whilst the distinctions between types of Methodism, Wesleyan, Primitive and Calvinistic, may still survive in a few memories, the labels for various congregational movements have largely lost resonance. What in the late eighteenth century was often termed 'Presbyterian' was by modern lights in fact 'Unitarian'. What became Congregational was once Brownist, and was an offshoot, through an Anglican cleric rejecting episcopacy, of the Elizabethan Church of England. It is tempting to affix the term Calvinist to reformed movements from the 1560s onwards, but that often does the real Calvin an injustice. His theology, stern thought it was, has emphases that salvage it from the stern objurgatory tracts of later sixteenth-century divines like Thomas Cartwright and William Perkins, and it is they who urged the puritan movement forward, and instigated the separatism which led to the foundation of free, that is, non-Anglican denominations. In Rutland, a significant figure was Archdeacon Robert Johnson, rector of North Luffenham and founder of Oakham and Uppingham schools, known in his time and after as a puritan by conviction but certainly not a separatist.

In a welter of names, these small Chapels, a few of which can trace their origin back to the seventeenth century, are the expression of the religious faith of a

gathered few, who passed on their light to succeeding generations, but who knew that seed could fall on poor soil.

The bibliography would be improved if it included the late Professor Collinson's publications on Puritanism, and, especially with regard to Chapels Society members, Nigel Webb's list on line: www.rutland history/org/pdf/rutlandchapels.pdf. This book is for the shelves of Rutlanders who have any learned interest in their county and its local history.

Anthony Earl

Battle Abbey & Battle Churches since 1066 by Keith D. Foord. Battle: bmcbooks, 2011. 186pp + 20 colour pp, paperback. ISBN 987-0-9569597-0-6. £15 inc p&p. Available from bmcbooks, 38 Hastings Rd, Battle TN33 0TE (bmcbooks @foord.clara.co.uk) cheques payable to Battle Methodist Church.

Being born in Hastings I have always been keen to promote the connection between the area and the occurrences in 1066. It is to be hoped that many people throughout the world still recognise the important events of that period. What is often less well known is that the town of Battle, a few miles inland, is so named because the battle of Hastings actually took place there. The Abbey, founded after the Battle, is the starting point for this history of churches in the town from that date until the present.

The author originally set out to write a history of Battle Methodist Church as that congregation embarked upon the exciting journey of relocating in new multi-purpose premises in a more populous part of town. Having made the difficult and emotional decision to vacate and sell the present chapel (1826 with subsequent alterations) the Church has been faced with the task of deciding exactly what is needed in order to continue and develop its mission in the present day. The final chapter of the book includes plans of the proposed new building.

Instead of a history of just the Methodist congregation the book grew to become a (necessarily limited) history and overview of all the town's congregations past and present. As such this book should prove to be of great interest to Chapel Society members and to a wide readership.

There is a detailed chapter on the Abbey and also one on the Parish Church (built opposite the Abbey, and a 'Royal Peculiar', outside the normal diocesan structures of the Church of England) and daughter (formerly mission) church. There is a chapter on the Catholic church and its relationship with local aristocracy. There is a wealth of information relating to the various Nonconformist and dissenting bodies that have made their home in the town. Of particular interest is the relationship between Presbyterian/Independents/Calvinists/Baptists/Universalists and Unitarians centred mainly on one piece of land next to the Catholic church. The Universalists in Battle were 'the first regular church in England to declare for Universalism'.

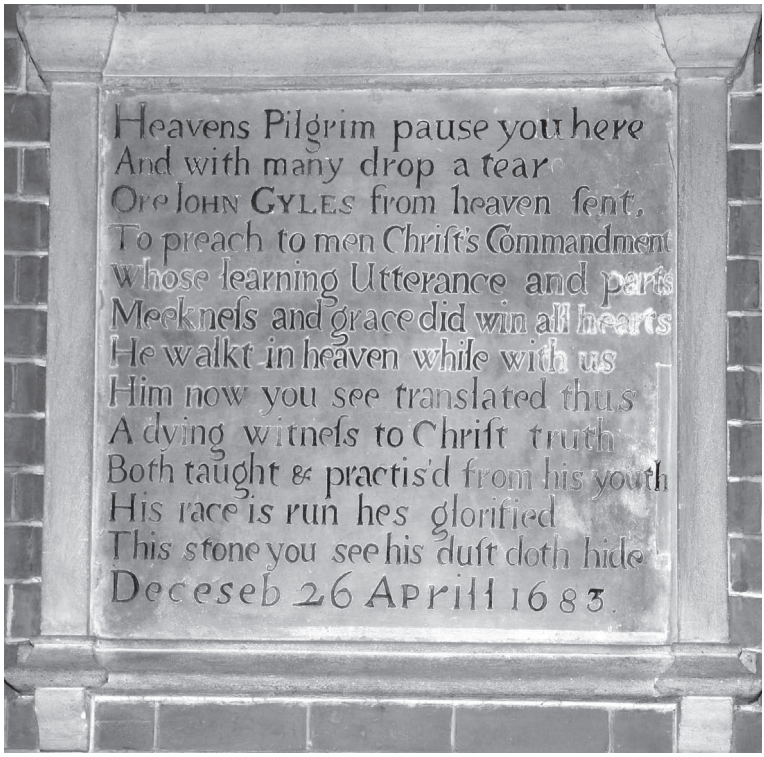
As well as the usual facts and figures there are numerous details of people that help to bring the stories to life. Many black and white and some colour

photographs and illustrations are included. There are also some interesting diagrams attempting to unite the stories of the individual congregations. A slight quibble relating to these is that they have not reproduced as well as the majority of the photographs in the book.

The author is a member of Battle Methodist Church and all proceeds from the sale of the book will go towards the church relocation fund. It is also to be hoped that, as well as being a useful historical record, the book will help to promote an awareness of the churches still active in the town.

For all these reasons I thoroughly recommend this book to you.

Stephen Page



Plaque on the wall of Christ Church U.R.C. Henley to the second minister of the church, John Gyles (photograph copyright Colin Baxter)

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