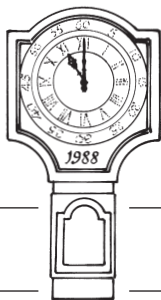


THE CHAPELS SOCIETY



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September 2012



Stourbridge Unitarian chapel — AD 1788 Hoc TEMPLUM aedificatum — as the inscription over the doorway proclaims (photograph copyright the late Colin Baxter)

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Newsletter and other Society publications). **Copy for the next (January 2013)
Newsletter needs to reach the Editor by 31 October 2012, please.**

NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

22 September 2012	Harrogate and Nidderdale visit (David Quick)
11 April 2013	Visit to Stowmarket area (Tim Grass)

PERSONALIA

Rod Ambler became a member of Council at the recent AGM and introduces himself here:

I may have been a founder member of the Society — only the records can confirm this. I was certainly a passive one, eventually lapsed, and was brought back into the fold by an invitation to organize a visit to north Lincolnshire in October 2003. Retirement from Hull University, after working successively in the Departments of Adult Education and History, provided the opportunity to continue to develop interests in the practice and social history of religion that had included work on Primitive Methodism, and an edition of the Lincolnshire returns of the 1851 Census of Religious Worship. My volume for the history of Lincolnshire series on religious life from 1660 to 1900, and an edition of nineteenth-century episcopal correspondence was also part of the more library- and archive-based stage of these interests. Involvement with the work of the Chapels Society opens up new perspectives and fresh opportunities.

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PROCEEDINGS

VISIT TO KIDDERMINSTER, BEWDLEY AND STOURBRIDGE, 14 APRIL 2012

Kidderminster ring road is a harsh intrusion into the fabric of the town, but its bridge over the river Stour, where Chapels Society members stepped down from the coach that had taken them from their meeting point at Stourbridge junction, affords views that encapsulate many aspects of the town's history and development. It is a history with much that relates to the interests of members of the Society, and themes that would be reiterated and developed throughout the day. These would include the distinctive place of the dissenting churches in the social and economic development of the area, and the response of the churches, in both architectural and organisational terms, to the changes that continue to challenge them.

The statue of Richard Baxter, the Puritan divine and minister in the town during the civil wars and Commonwealth, stands outside the parish church to one side of the ring road. It was erected in 1875 outside what is now the Baxter United Reformed Church, and moved to its present site in 1967. With the reference in its inscription, which was composed by the local Unitarian minister, to Baxter's advocacy of 'unity and comprehension' in the 'stormy and divided age' in which he ministered, it was a fitting reminder of the rich religious history of the area.

While any tangible connection of Baxter to the United Reformed Church that carries his name — the first church stop on the Spring Visit — is limited to a seventeenth-century oak communion table that is said to have come from the parish church, the church traces its origins to the work of Thomas Baldwin, one



The statue of Richard Baxter at Kidderminster (Copyright Roger Kidd and licensed for reuse under a Creative Commons Licence)

of his assistants during the period that Baxter ministered in the town as Lecturer and Vicar. Baldwin would probably have become the minister of the first Presbyterian meeting house built on the site in 1693 but for his death that year. It was rebuilt in 1753, and again in 1824–25, by when it was Congregational and known as the Old Meeting.

The Baxter Church, built between 1884 and 1885, a stone building in the Gothic style by Frederick William Tarring (1847–1925), with an internally imposing two storey Sunday school of 1864, is therefore the fourth on the site and, with its 140 foot tower and spire, was nicknamed ‘St Baxter on the Bridge’. It has a north chancel and east and west aisles although its galleries, supported by cast iron columns, belie any ideas of ecclesiological correctness on the architect’s part, while the reordering of 1967–70 led to the removal of the original stone pulpit, the construction of a new communion dais, and the construction of a new entrance vestibule.

The iron of the church’s columns represented one aspect of the industrial past of the region that was being visited. Its fine range of stained glass, although not manufactured in the Midlands, reflected another, and the group was fortunate in that it included Society member, Alan Brooks, of the 2007 Worcestershire Pevsner, whose considerable expertise in this field enhanced the group’s appreciation of a number of the chapels that were visited. The Baxter church included work in the communion area by Ward and Hughes that was contemporary with the building, two north-east windows by what was then (1921–2) Powell and Sons, of Whitefriars, London, and the slightly later (1926) north-west windows designed by Robert Anning Bell (1863–1933).

The Kidderminster Unitarian New Meeting House was built in 1782 for a Presbyterian congregation that split from the Old Meeting in 1782, and the main building dates from then. In due course it became Unitarian. The original building, as described by Stell, with its façade of three bays and a central doorway, flanked by windows set in arched recesses might have been seen as appropriate to a congregation of, as was said of the Unitarians of Bridport, Dorset, ‘respectability and opulence’. But it was built set back from Church Street, and has only become a more significant part of the street scene with the demolition of the cottages and school premises that formed a passageway into the yard at its front, and with extensions to the building in 1879 and 1883.

The remodelling of the New Meeting House began with internal alterations between 1863 and 1870, when the pews were installed. This was followed by the addition of a chancel in 1879 by a local architect J. M. Gething (1830–1919) ‘in perpendicular Gothic style so as to harmonize as perfectly as possible with the old building’, and an extension to the front. The new stone façade of 1883, in what is described by Stell as ‘the Perpendicular Gothic style’, was by Payne and Talbot of Birmingham. It now lacks its original parapet, turret at the apex of the gable, and the pinnacles that originally topped the flanking buttresses. Stone tracery windows were also inserted, in place of smaller wooden windows, into the brick side walls of the original building, while the 1883 work also resulted in the repanelling of the ceiling, the introduction of tinted cathedral glass and a sanctuary lined with encaustic tiles by Maw and Co. of Broseley, Shropshire.

The range of monuments in the church was a strong reminder that although the Unitarian chapel was hidden up a passage off the town street, its members, like Nicholas Pearsall, one of the church's founders who was prominent in the establishment of Kidderminster's carpet industry in the early eighteenth century, were highly visible in local commercial and civic life. The significance of the school that was associated with the church was also attested in many of the memorials, while church members also held the office of Justice of the Peace and Poor Law Guardian. A former minister, Edward Parry, was mayor of the town and founded the still continuing weekly newspaper, the *Kidderminster Shuttle*.

The interior furnishings of the church owed their share of Baxter-associated material to the initiative of Nicholas Pearsall. The richly carved Jacobean pulpit dated 1621, but with some medieval material in its base, was purchased by him in the first half of the 1780s, when it was discarded as lumber from the parish church. As Baxter's pulpit it has an honoured position under the chancel arch, better preserved than the school buildings erected by Pearsall in 1792, of which only a fragment survives.

The stained glass windows from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century add further distinction to the church. In chronological order there is first the highly pictorial 'Sower' of 1887, with its strong regional associations as an early product of the Birmingham workshop of William Pearce, with another Pearce window of two lights (1894 and 1903), one based on Raphael's 'Sistine Madonna', and like the 'Sower' on the south wall. Between Pearce's two windows, in what must have been a fairly intensive campaign of glazing, there came a four-light chancel window of 1890, with New Testament scenes, by John Hardman Powell (1827–95) of Hardman's, again of Birmingham — a firm distinguished by its association with the Pugins. Two other windows on the south wall are perhaps by Heaton, Butler and Bayne showing Christ in the Temple with the Elders, dated 1894, and 'Christ and the Woman of Samaria', dated 1896. The three north wall windows, each of two lights and made between 1903 and 1913, are also Hardman: 'The Good Shepherd', 'The Faithful Servant', and 'The Charity of Dorcas'.

After Kidderminster, and on to Bewdley, where the coach crossed into the town by Thomas Telford's Bridge, completed in 1798. The last of a series that were built over the Severn, it belonged to a period when the town's importance as a river port was beginning to decline — the result of the extension of the canal network from the Midlands to the Severn at Stourport — but leaving an attractive and interesting architectural legacy. This included the four chapels visited by the Society.

The origins of the Presbyterian congregation that built what is now Holy Family Roman Catholic church lay, like the churches visited at Kidderminster, in the period of the Commonwealth and the separation and ejections of the 1660s. Henry Oasland had been curate at St Anne's chapel of ease, that served Bewdley, from 1650. He was ejected from his post in 1662. His house was licensed for worship as Presbyterian under Indulgence in 1672, but his congregation had become sufficiently well-supported for it to build a permanent meeting house about 1696.

It was paid for by public subscription — timber framed and dating from 1698 (according to McLachlan and Hague *The Unitarian Heritage*) — and built on what is now known as the town's High Street, then Upper Street, on the same plot as the present building.

The large, semi-derelict brick warehouse that flanks one side of the site is a reminder of the place of Dissenters at the heart of the commercial life of the town. At the time that the chapel, built for Oasland, but with his son Edward as minister from before 1701, was placed in trust in 1700 its congregation included a mercer, an apothecary, a glover, a ropemaker, a combmaker and shoemakers. The present elegant building that succeeded it, built about 1778 and described at the time as 'an excellent building bearing evidence of erection by a wealthy congregation', reflects the continuing prosperity of the church's members. Its congregation had become Unitarian by the nineteenth century, and the chapel continued in use until about 1894, when it closed. Two years later it was leased temporarily to local Baptists, but was totally disused by 1930, when it was sold to a local builder, and used for a workshop and store. The building was semi-derelict by 1951, when it was purchased by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham for £350 and, after emergency repairs, the first Mass was celebrated in the chapel at Christmas 1952. Restoration was completed by September 1953 when the new church was officially opened and dedicated to the Holy Family.

The chapel is elliptically ended, with brick walls, a continuous stone eaves cornice, six round arched windows, with stone surrounds, on three sides, and a slate roof. There is a vestry, built within a couple of decades of the original chapel, onto its north-east front. To the left of the entrance a curving external staircase,



Bewdley Holy Family Roman Catholic church, formerly Presbyterian, showing the elliptical 'east' end (photograph copyright the late Colin Baxter)

with a roof supported by wooden columns, gave access to the gallery. The columns were retained as an external feature when the staircase was enclosed during the restoration of the 1950s and provided with access from the interior of the building. The gallery, above the entrance on the north-east of the building, is curved like the exterior of the building, as were the original box pews, focussed on a high central pulpit. This had its own curved staircase, but like the pews, was dismantled in the period when the chapel was not used for worship. The restoration and adaption for Roman Catholic worship was by J. T. Lynch of Jennings, Homer and Lynch of Brierley Hill. Among the church's treasures is a wooden family rood that once belonged to Cardinal Newman.

The four places of worship visited by the Society were all located on Bewdley High Street. All of them were set back from the road, and the Methodist chapel that was next visited used the considerable slope of the river valley on the north-east side of the street. Formerly Wesleyan, it is dated 1795, but was opened for worship in 1794. The brick building with a three bay façade, which is now rendered, and a central door, has a slated roof. It was extended at the rear in the 1850s to give three floors, and more recent changes include the insertion of a lightweight ceiling at gallery level in the 1970s. The gallery, that once encircled the interior, now stops short of the pulpit wall. There is a central block of pews, probably from the early 1890s, and a rostrum with pulpit and organ. A lift was inserted in the entrance foyer in 2008 to provide access to the various levels of the building, although the gallery space is at present unused.

Crossing back to the other side of the High Street, the group paid a brief visit to Bewdley Baptist chapel which stands down a passageway behind other buildings. This congregation also has its origins in the responses of the ministers at the town's Anglican chapel of ease to the challenges that came with the upheavals of the Civil Wars, Interregnum and Restoration. John Tombes, curate at St Anne's chapel between 1646 and 1650, and the predecessor of the Presbyterian Henry Oasland, formed a Baptist church in the town in about 1649. He left to become Vicar of Leominster, but the Bewdley cause appears to have continued, with a building registered for worship in 1698.

The present chapel, which was built about 1764, appears to have been the first purpose-built Baptist place of worship in the town, and was financed from a legacy of £100. It stands behind a Sunday school building from the 1920s, and has been much altered internally. A gallery supported by cast iron columns survives at one end of the building, and may be the remains of the work on the chapel that was carried out during the ministry of the Revd George Cosens. He was at Bewdley between 1846 and 1854, and distinctive among his contemporaries because of his Afro-Caribbean identity. Now, much altered internally, the chapel has been adapted for modern worship needs with an imaginative longitudinal arrangement of seating and gallery.

After passing Lower Park House, the birthplace of Stanley Baldwin, later first Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, MP for Bewdley in succession to his father, and Prime Minister 1923–1924, 1924–29, 1934–37, the group came to Bewdley Friends' Meeting House. Baldwin's ancestry has some resonance with Society members as he was the great grandson of Wesleyan ministers through both his mother and

father, one of whom was President of Conference, and the grandson of another, who came to the area as a supernumerary minister in 1867, the year of Baldwin's birth, but died the next year. Like the other chapels of Bewdley High Street the meeting house is tucked away from the main road, but in a semi-rural setting that was less redolent of the world of Quaker enterprise than might be expected in a town such as Bewdley. Local tradition has it that the meeting house owed its origins to Friends from the countryside under the patronage of a local landowner.

The first house in Bewdley registered for worship by Friends, in 1689, was said to be on 'Severside'. Then a house on the present site was purchased in 1691. It was associated with a burial ground which may have been used from the 1680s. The relative obscurity of the meeting house was compounded by problems over access. The entrance to the new meeting house, a single roomed brick and tile building built 'in the room of the old' in 1706, has been successively on its south-west and north-east sides, and finally in the south-east gable end below the gallery. A small extension was built on its south-west wall, probably in the 1720s. After minor improvements in the 1960s, and the purchase of additional land with provision for a new entrance, a new block that incorporated the 1720s extension, was built in 1970. This cost about £5,500 and the architect was H. Martin Lidbetter.

After lunch at Bewdley Friends' Meeting House, the group moved on to Stourbridge, where the strong links between the commercial and industrial development of the area and religious nonconformity were again evident in the history of many of the chapels that were visited. They were part of the growth in provision, especially from the 1780s, as Stourbridge moved from being an important market town to a place of heavy industry. As befitted the religious body whose family networks were significant in the iron industry, Quakers established the first Nonconformist meeting in the town, about the time of the Restoration, although their meeting house, built on its present site on a thousand year lease in 1688, was alluded to rather than studied as the group moved to what is now denominating as a Unitarian chapel in Lower High Street.

No fewer than nine Puritan ministers lost their livings in 1660–62, and lived in and around Stourbridge, some supported in their ministries by the Foley family, the pre-eminent local ironmasters, owners of a network of furnaces, forges and slitting mills. Thomas Foley had a private chapel in his house some two miles north-west of Stourbridge, and there was another in a house that he owned in the town's High Street. A permanent chapel was built in 1698 for this Presbyterian congregation, behind a house in Coventry Street. It appears to have been a sizeable building, with a gallery, and one of Thomas Foley's domestic chaplains, Thomas Flower was, until his death in 1733, its first minister. The chapel was rebuilt at public expense at a cost of £130 4s. 1d., although lower estimates survive, after its destruction in the 1715 Jacobite riots, but by the 1770s the chapel had become too small and its condition was deteriorating: 'inconvenient . . . having nothing venerable, but exciting the idea of a dwelling house of three stories converted into a place of worship'.

With the appointment of Benjamin Flower as its new minister the present chapel was built in Lower High Street, the best street in Stourbridge, at a cost of



*The gallery in Stourbridge Unitarian chapel
(photograph copyright the late Colin Baxter)*

£1204, designed by Thomas Johnson of Worcester and built by Blackburn and Burchell of Studley, Warwickshire. This red brick building with slated roof and stone dressings — and 41¼ ft by 18¼ ft compared with the 38 ft by 21 ft 11 in of the building it replaced — reflects the growing prosperity of Stourbridge in the eighteenth century. Above the entrance porch is the proud inscription ‘AD 1788 Hoc TEMPLUM aedificatum’. This was at the time when, under Flower’s influence, and on the secession of a small group of members, the congregation became Unitarian. A burial ground was added in 1791.

The interior has most of the original box pews, and a gallery, supported by two fluted Roman Doric columns, was erected in 1794 at the east end of the chapel extending into the chapel above the entrance. It has benefactions recorded around its panelled front, and accommodated an organ, choir and schoolchildren. The precise dates of the alterations that have taken place at the west end of the chapel are somewhat problematical: a chancel, with rounded arch, was inserted in about 1860, and the pulpit moved to its south-west side; the organ, which occupies the chancel, is said to date from 1913, but it has a screen that is apparently of 1896.

In 1823 cast iron frames were inserted into the windows of the chapel — probably the product of local industry, certainly a reminder of the source of the prosperity of Stourbridge which local Unitarians appear to have shared in good measure. It was a prosperity and influence that is reflected in the elegant memorial tablets that adorn the chapel walls. The names on them reveal something of both local and national Unitarian networks, influence and attainment: Samuel Parkes, who died in 1811, a local grocer, one of the first trustees of the chapel,

father of Samuel, a manufacturing chemist, who was the author of a number of best selling manuals of chemistry, and a zealous Unitarian; the son of Charles Wellbeloved, tutor at Manchester College, York; Charles Cochran (1835–98), President of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in 1889, whose Woodside Iron Works, near Dudley, were associated with many important structures including Holborn Viaduct, Westminster Bridge and the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

The ten families who seceded in 1788 from the Stourbridge Unitarians joined an Independent congregation that had originated in about 1743. From 1791 to 1810 they occupied the old Presbyterian meeting house in Coventry Street, but after they had merged with a congregation established by the preachers of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, a new Independent church was formed. A chapel was built on a site in Lower High Street, opposite the Unitarian church. It was adapted, enlarged and improved in the course of the nineteenth century, but in 1978, by when it was in a poor condition, its congregation, now part of the United Reformed Church, moved to the Anglican church of St John the Evangelist. The old chapel was demolished in 2000, and its site developed for flats.

St John the Evangelist, which was visited by the group, stands on the Stourbridge ring road. For a time after the United Reformed congregation moved there the church was shared with the small Anglican congregation, but the Anglicans eventually moved back to their mother church and the building was bought by the United Reformed Church. Built in 1860, to designs by G. E. Street in 'Early English Gothic', the church is mainly of red sandstone, but with brick bands and dressings. It has a slate roof with circular windows to the clerestory, and a flèche at the west end.

The proceeds of the sale of the old United Reformed church site in Lower High Street were used to create a narthex at the liturgical west end of the church. This has become the main worship area, and the church space is used for a variety of purposes, including an audio studio, in connection with its ministry of social outreach. It has a series of windows by Burlison and Grylls. The earliest is the five light east window of 1912 and the latest from 1937, with others between: two in the baptistery from 1926, the five lancets (1919), and a circular rose window of 1926 at the west end.

The Roman Catholic parish of Our Lady and All Saints, Stourbridge, had its origins in the occasional celebration of Mass from 1812 in the upstairs room of an ironmonger's shop in the town's High Street. The celebrant, the Revd Francis Martyn, who was ordained in 1805, came from Oscott College, Sutton Coldfield, where he had trained, and was ordained in 1805 — said to be the first Roman Catholic priest to be wholly trained in England since the Reformation. By 1816 the growing Roman Catholic congregation in Stourbridge required larger premises, so a cottage was rented in a yard off Upper High Street and the upstairs rooms used as a chapel. The congregation increased further, and the site on which the present church stands in New Road was purchased. A house and chapel dedicated to All Saints was opened in 1824.

The present church, to which the group made its penultimate visit, replaced the mission chapel. Dedicated to Our Lady and All Saints, it was designed by

Edward Welby Pugin (1834–75) and completed in 1864, but with the steeple base built only to a height of sixteen feet. The 136 ft three-stage tower and spire were completed in 1889 by the architect George H. Cox of Birmingham, following Pugin's designs, but with a new lower stage and foundations because of structural problems with the original work. The church is built of red brick with stone dressings with a steeply pitched roof of green and blue Bangor slate.

The light and bright church interior, still adorned with Easter flowers at the time of the Society's visit, comprises a lofty nave of eight bays with short columns of alternate Aberdeen grey and Peterhead red polished granite, north and south aisles, and a chancel. The richly carved stone reredos, also designed by E. W. Pugin, was installed in 1875, with statues added later. The chancel, which remains painted, although the decoration of the rest of the church has been modified, has painted roof panels. All the stained glass in the church is by Hardman and Co. The rose window at the east end was installed in 1875, at the same time as those behind the altars in the side chapels. The remaining windows were given by various donors at various times up to the 1930s.

When John Wesley visited Stourbridge in 1770 he found the inhabitants to be as 'wild as colts untamed, though the bridle was in their mouth', and it was not until twenty years later that a Methodist congregation was established. After meeting in a building in Mill Lane at the north end of the town's High Street, they moved to a house on the High Street, and then rented accommodation in a local theatre. A site on New Road was acquired, and a chapel that accommodated nearly 1000, with a house and other buildings, was completed in 1805 at a cost of £1,413 18s. 10d. It was a simple rectangular building, with a low pitched roof and internal gallery, that faced onto New Road. Its successor, which cost £13,000, and was opened in 1928, was the last chapel visited by the group.

The enlargement of the New Road site by the purchase of additional land in the 1820s meant that the chapel could be extended, and there was a continuing programme of improvement and development, including the provision of a new Sunday school. This was opened in 1886 after additional land was purchased. But by the beginning of the twentieth century the chapel building was seen as outdated, as well as being in a deteriorating condition. There had been plans to rebuild it for upwards of fifty years, but it was not until the end of the First World War that a building fund was started, and the foundation stone of the new building was laid on 8 September 1927. The opening and dedication service was held on 28 June 1928.

The new chapel, by Crouch, Butler and Savage of Birmingham, was built at right angles to the position of the old and so runs along the street with the Sunday school to the side. It is a cruciform building of Kenilworth brick with stone dressings, and a tower at the north-west corner. There are entrance porches, a vestibule, nave, aisles, transepts and organ chamber, with seating for 500 in the nave and transepts, and provision for a choir in the chancel. Its confident 'modified ... Romanesque' style is as redolent of the strength and importance of a Wesleyan Methodist past as of the needs of the new institutionally united Methodism that was to come in four years time.

Contemporary needs were very much in the minds of members of the present congregation when extra room space was created in a bold and imaginative scheme that redeveloped the interior of the main chapel building. As part of this work, completed in 2009, the Sunday school building was sold and, with the active encouragement of local authority planners, its original façade was retained in a residential development. Extra rooms and space, which could be accessed either through the chapel or directly from outside, were created by reducing the worship area in the church. The timber framework of these new structures, not only echoed the fine woodwork of the 1920s, but provided a sense of strength of purpose to the new venture.

The concluding tea in these newly created premises brought to an end a day in which the rich Nonconformist and Roman Catholic heritage of the area had been experienced in all its fullness. The Society's thanks are due to Christopher Wakeling and David Watts for the excellent arrangements for the day.

Rod Ambler

This account is heavily indebted to the comprehensive notes for the visit, with its list of material for further reading, and to the guides and histories, hard copy and virtual, of chapels that were visited; also, from the visit reading list, D. M. Butler, The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain (1999), G. and J. Hague, The Unitarian Heritage. An Architectural Survey of Chapels and Churches in the Unitarian tradition in the British Isles (1986) and [C. Stell], An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Central England (1986); as well as material from the Victoria History of the County of Worcester, vol. 3 (1913) and the on-line Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

VISIT TO HAMPSTEAD, 7 JULY 2012

Andrew Worth's 'Perambulation' of Hampstead Churches and Chapels, which followed the AGM on 7 July, attracted its usual large and interested group of members, if not its usual cloudless weather! We were treated not only to a tour of this delightful urban village and its inhabitants but also to a feast of architectural and ecclesiastical history in true Worthian style!

We started at Heath Street Baptist Church [C. G. Searle, 1860–1] where an elaborate Gothic front hides a large preaching barn built for 700 but now attracting a congregation of only little more than 1% of that. Members were intrigued by the display of pictures, drawings and documents in the vestries, which still contain their own ministerial library; and fascinated by the mysterious pulleyed ropes behind the chancel arch and the stained glass in the roof over the choir, not to mention the originals of the strange fungal carvings which decorated the hammer beams, which caused much speculation.

Our perambulation then took a route around some of the older parts of the village, through Flask Walk and past the wells themselves, passing the sites of a number of previous chapels and stopping briefly to note the exteriors of the Jewish Shul of 2012, occupying a building of 1890, originally the mortuary for the New End Hospital and then for many years the New End Theatre, and of the



*The stuccoed front of 1850 to St Mary
Roman Catholic Church, Holly Place
(photograph copyright Chris Skidmore)*

Friends Meeting House of 1907. A short climb brought us to Holly Mount and to the building where the Baptists had worshipped from 1818 until the opening of Heath Street, preserved in remarkably good shape despite a number of subsequent uses.

The next visit was to the Roman Catholic St Mary Hampstead in Holly Place where a modest chapel was erected in 1816 recessed into a row of Regency cottages: a stuccoed front with a Tuscan doorway was added in 1850. The interior with its round-headed windows must have originally been quite plain but the addition of side chapels and an elaborate altar and baldacchino surrounded with decoration of an excessive kind has quite ruined it, in this stern nonconformist's view.

A pleasant walk took us first down to the parish church of St John, surrounded by its two graveyards — with George du Maurier incongruously side by side with Hugh Gaitskill — through Church Row then along the High Street into Rosslyn Hill for our visit to Rosslyn Hill Unitarian [John Johnson, 1862]. We had been fitted into the lunch break of a meditation workshop but were given a warm welcome by the pastor and his wife. The church is large, wide rather than lofty, with no pews remaining: a large organ with an elaborate case sits in the rear gallery. Most of the interest lies in the decorative additions — a Parliament clock, some Flaxman reliefs and Burne-Jones glass, much of which has been collected from other sites.

Our route now headed towards the Heath, passing first the church hall, currently adapted to residential use, which is all that remains of Trinity Presbyterian Church. Next we passed the Denning Hall, again a private home but originally

a mission hall attached to St Stephen's Rosslyn Hill. Finally we stopped to admire or deplore the modernist houses on Willow Road designed by Ernő Goldfinger in 1939, the central one of which, the architect's home, is now owned by the National Trust. A wedding prevented us doing any more than admire the elegant exterior of St John's Downshire Hill, of 1823, now the only proprietary chapel in London. Then it was a quiet stroll down Keat's Grove to busy South End, dominated by the Royal Free Hospital.

Climbing Pond Street to its junction with Rosslyn Hill we passed the Armoury, which suggested a possible Salvation Army connection but was in fact a Victorian Drill Hall. The intersection we reached next was perhaps architecturally the highlight of the day since facing each other across the top of Haverstock Hill are two large churches. One is Samuel Teulon's gothic masterpiece of 1869–71, his 'mighty church' of St Stephen's. Redundant since the 1970s, it is now owned by a preservation trust who let it as a private hall. The other is the Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church in deep red brick with terracotta decoration in a more Romanesque style by Alfred Waterhouse of 1883–4, now George Martin's Air Studios, but which in its heyday could accommodate 1500 within its central irregularly-hexagonal space.

Having admired the exteriors of these two magnificent beasts our next visit was to a much smaller and more modest structure, the Church of the Christian Community in Glenilla Road, Belsize Park [Kenneth Bayes, 1948]. This group, founded on the principles of Rudolf Steiner, demanded a church in keeping with Steiner's ideas, a space with no sharp corners except the roof-ridge. There was an altar surmounted by candles on a semicircular stepped rostrum and a relaxing light purple wash to the walls: the organic window shapes were perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the design.

Our last two visits involved some more stiff walking but yielded a range of delights. St. Dominic's Priory was a missionary church for the working class community attracted by work in the capital. Originally started in stone it was



*The intriguing window shapes of the Church of the Christian Community
(photograph copyright Chris Skidmore)*

finished in brick and opened in 1883. What you notice, apart from the simplicity of the nave-less design is the sheer size — it is 300 ft in length and 85 ft wide, the roof is 100 ft high — this is a cathedral to replace those that had been stolen in the sixteenth century. And fourteen of the seventeen side chapels are devoted to the mysteries of the Rosary. The Prince of Wales Road Wesleyan Methodist (now the 176 Gallery) is a large classical chapel built in 1871 to the designs of Elijah Hoole. It has a grand five-bay front with Corinthian pillars supporting an elaborate pediment. The interior retains its gallery round three sides and some interesting art nouveau glass, although stripped of its pews. The current owners have added a café, for which the surviving party were very grateful at the end of a demanding but rewarding day.

Chris Skidmore

Andrew has some spare copies of his excellent illustrated notes for this perambulation which are available for £2.00 [cheques only, please, made out to Andrew Worth] plus a C5 sized SAE by writing to Andrew Worth, 25 Park Chase, Wembley HA9 8EQ.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 24th Annual General Meeting of the Chapels Society took place at Heath Street Baptist Church, Hampstead, London on 7 July 2012. Forty two members and guests were present and the meeting was ably and efficiently chaired by the President, Dr Chris Wakeling. As is our custom the honorary officers gave brief reports of the Society's activities during 2011.

The Hon Secretary (Sara Crofts) noted that there had been very little casework notified to the Society in 2011 although she had no explanation for this change. The Society has no statutory casework remit and therefore it relies on being alerted to cases by members or conservation officers. It is possible that the reduction in local authority resources might be partly responsible for the decline in referrals. She advised members of the good news that the Society had appointed a Casework Officer in the person of Michael Atkinson, an architect based in North Shields. She was also pleased to report that the Society's new website had been launched and that further information would be added on a regular basis.

The Hon Editor (Chris Skidmore) thanked members for their contributions to the Society's *Newsletter* and encouraged more people to consider writing articles. He was also in need of volunteers to review books — this was not an onerous task and reviewers are allowed to retain the books they review. Chris also noted that although there had been no publications released in 2011 he was working on the first of the new triennial publications, which would be issued free to members. This is due for publication in early 2013 and will contain the proceedings of the recent 'Sitting in Chapel' conference.

The Hon Visits Secretary (Tim Grass) gave a brief summary of the previous year's visits. There had been successful visits to the Isle of Man (April), Exeter (July), and Reading and Henley (October). The first of the 2012 visits to Kidderminster and Bewdley in April had also been well received. Tim noted that the

Society tries to ensure a good geographical spread; we are always open to suggestions regarding visits to 'strands afar remote'. The final visit of 2012 will take members to Harrogate and Nidderdale in the company of David Quick in September and plans for 2013 are well in hand. Tim also took the opportunity to announce that the Society will need to find a new Visits Secretary to take over with effect from July 2013. The basic requirement is for someone who is well organised and Tim encouraged anyone who might be interested to have a conversation with him when convenient.

As the Hon Treasurer (David Watts) was not able to be present the Hon President presented the Society's Accounts to the AGM. The adoption of the *Annual Report and Accounts 2011* was proposed by Stephen Duckworth, seconded by Ted Royle and agreed *nem. con.* The election of the Society's officers and council members then proceeded as per the agenda. We were pleased to welcome Jean West as our new Hon Treasurer and to welcome new Council members Rod Ambler and Michael Atkinson. David Quick was also elected for a second term and the President took the opportunity to thank members and officers present and elsewhere for their support of the Society over the previous year. In particular, he thanked Alan Petford and David Watts who were standing down from the Council and Robin Phillips who had handed over the role of Membership Secretary to Paul Gardner.

The President also expressed sincere thanks to the membership for their help during the process of revising the annual subscriptions. The transition had been more difficult than expected due to inevitable problems with banks and exacerbated by a change in the Society's sort code as a result of the Alliance & Leicester being taken over by Santander. There are still a few unresolved issues that the Society is working hard to rectify. He encouraged members to contact Paul Gardner, the Hon Membership Secretary, if they had any queries.

Sara Crofts

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Paul Gardner informs us of the following new members whom we welcome:

Jill Channer, Westbury, Wiltshire
Dr Angela Connelly, Chorlton, Manchester
The Revd Andrew M. Hill, York
Stuart J. Leadley, Cottingham, East Yorkshire
William Waddilove, Wolston, Coventry

We have also heard in the last few months of the deaths of the following members:

Alan Rowe OBE died on April 30 at home in Suffolk: he served as a general practitioner in Ixworth for 34 years until his retirement. However his medical interests stretched much further to pathology, medical education and public health: he had been an editor of the *World Medical Journal*. A quiet, gentle man, members will probably best remember Alan for his impromptu organ recitals during Society visits.

Laurence Dopson spent over 65 years in nursing and medical journalism, the first man to be a member of the editorial staff of a nursing journal in Britain and later a talented obituarist. Chapels were among his many interests alongside milestones, seaside piers and steam railways. He died in Somerset after a short illness on 19 June.

Colin Baxter died at home in Bishops Stortford on 8 August. A companionable man with a dry sense of humour, Colin had been both an academic and a URC minister. Despite his illness he had continued as a regular attendee at Society visits and was a reliable supplier of photographs for the *Newsletter*, as this edition bears witness.

VISITS PROGRAM FOR 2013

As you will have seen our Spring visit will be to the Stowmarket area of Suffolk. We are hoping to organise a visit to Liverpool in the Summer but that is still in embryo. Nor do we yet have a date for our Autumn trip which will begin and end in Taunton and explore the villages to the east.

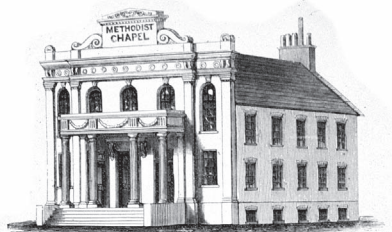
Tim Grass, our current Visits Secretary, indicated at the AGM his intention to stand down from the next AGM. Any members interested in taking up this post, which is one largely of coordination and advice, are encouraged to contact Tim.

JOBSON CENTENARY

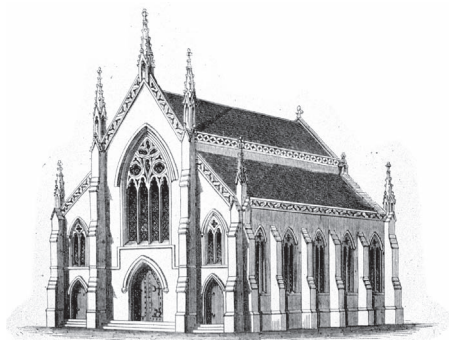
In the May *Newsletter* the bicentenary of Pugin's birth was mentioned. Among the other interesting people to have been born in 1812, Frederick James Jobson should be of special interest to us. Jobson's *Chapel and School Architecture* (of 1850) is famous as the book which interpreted Pugin's ideas for a Nonconformist audience. Jobson's attempt to persuade Wesleyans that Gothic principles were compatible with Protestant practice still makes for fascinating reading. Few people can have been as well qualified as Jobson to write such a book.

Jobson had been apprenticed in Lincoln to E. J. Willson, an antiquary and architect, who contributed to several of John Britton's antiquarian publications and then wrote the text for A. C. Pugin's *Specimens of Gothic Architecture* (1821–3) and *Examples of Gothic Architecture* (1828–34). Through this contact Willson — who was a Roman Catholic — became a friend of the young A. W. N. Pugin. Jobson must have absorbed something of Willson's passion for medieval architecture and at least a little of the practical side of an architect's work.

But in religion Jobson took a different path, becoming first a local preacher and, in 1834, an itinerant Wesleyan minister. In Methodism he was a high-flier, being appointed to Wesley's City Road Chapel on three occasions, and serving the connexion at a very senior level. During the 1840s he was part of the Chapel-Building Committee and wrote reports for the Wesleyan conference, arguing for a better approach to the design of chapels. His articles on the subject, first published in a Methodist paper, *The Watchman*, became (with the conference's encouragement) the first section of *Chapel and School Architecture*.



Usual Style.



Gothic Style.

Jobson's comparison of the 'usual style' with that of the 'Gothic style' for Methodist chapels

The book's contrasted illustrations of a Methodist chapel in the 'usual style' and one in the Gothic style show that Jobson had absorbed something of Pugin's polemical methods as well as his architectural tastes. The 'usual style' is recognisably based on the large Wesleyan chapels of the Regency, but it is a caricature, despite the author's claim to the contrary. In contrast, of course, the Gothic example is a model of rectitude, and the book later illustrates a range of chapels designed on similar principles.

Chapel and School Architecture appeared at a propitious moment so far as religious architecture was concerned, but its immediate effect among Methodists must have been blunted, since publication coincided with the Fly Sheet controversy that grievously wounded the Wesleyan connexion. Jobson was firmly on the conservative side, and he went on to play an influential role in many aspects of the movement, not least as president of the Wesleyan conference in 1869.

Part III of *Chapel and School Architecture*, which deals with the legal and practical details of building, is easily overlooked as a merely technical appendix. But its emphasis on the role of the Chapel-Building Committee, which met monthly in Manchester and whose prior approval was required for any new buildings, reveals a pattern of national control that even the Church of England could not dream of. Jobson was a minister in Manchester during the key years 1843–9 and so was at the centre of the process. Though he subsequently moved to other parts of the country, Jobson helped sustain the system of caring for the connexion's buildings, a system whose Manchester hub was strengthened through the years of Methodist unification. In 2011 the Methodist Property Office was disbanded but the church's conservation officer is still based in Manchester, and its Listed Buildings Advisory Committee continues to meet there.

Christopher Wakeling

NEWS

New director for Historic Churches Trust

Roland Jeffery took over from Dr Jennifer Freeman, becoming the second Director of the Historic Churches Trust, on May 25 this year. Roland Jeffery has considerable experience in overseeing a range of historic buildings restoration projects including the award-winning restoration of Hawksmoor's Christ Church Spitalfields in London. He has recently been a Projects Adviser for The Prince's Regeneration Trust. He also sits on the Casework Committee of the Twentieth Century Society. You can follow him on Twitter at @HistoricChapels.

The Round Arch

Chapels Society member Tony Hilton has recently started an illustrated newsletter with this title and devoted to the preservation of churches of the Byzantine-Romanesque Revival. Members wishing to obtain a copy can contact Tony by e-mail at j.a.hilton@hotmail.co.uk.

Back numbers available

Christine van Melzen is offering her complete run of 50 Chapels Society *Newsletters* to any member who is interested in having them. She is happy to post them providing the postage is reimbursed — or you could collect them from her Suffolk home, combining that with a visit to Walpole Old Chapel! Christina can be contacted at chrisvanmelzen@btopenworld.com.

Downside Abbey

Downside Abbey has commissioned a lavish new publication on the architectural history of the Abbey Church. This coffee table style publication has contributions from a number of leading architectural historians and is edited by the abbot, Chapels Society member Dom Aidan Bellenger. It features specially commissioned images by architectural photographer Paul Barker. It can currently be purchased from the Abbey online shop [http://www.downsideshop.co.uk/online_shop/History.html] at the prepublication price of £35.

Kindle edition for *The Unitarians: A Short History*

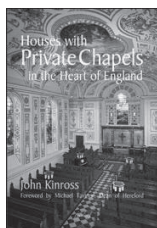
Dr Len Smith's useful book on Unitarian history has now been published in electronic book format for only £4.91: copies are available from the Amazon website. The book has been out of print in the UK for a number of years although a more expensive paperback edition is available from <http://www.blackstoneeditions.com/>.

VAT on church repairs

After extensive lobbying by the Heritage Alliance and others, the Government has responded by allocating an extra £30 million of funding a year for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme for the duration of this Parliament, to help offset the change to the VAT rate applied to alterations to listed buildings announced in the Budget. The extended scheme will come into effect on 1 October to coincide with the VAT changes — details at <http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/>.

BOOK REVIEW

Houses with Private Chapels in the Heart of England by John Kinross. Ross-on-Wye: Fineleaf Editions, 2012. 120pp, paperback. ISBN 978-1-907741-08-1. £9.95 from www.fineleaf.co.uk/titles/privatechapelsin.html



As an architect and frequent visitor to historic houses, churches, chapels and monuments of almost every sort this is exactly the sort of publication that I normally enjoy. It is essentially a modest gazetteer of chapels attached or connected to country houses in the West Midlands that are publicly accessible. The list of those included runs to 34 and covers a considerable range from exceedingly grand and celebrated properties such as Eastnor Castle, Coughton Court and Stoneleigh Abbey down to some less well known places such as Baddesley Clinton, Madresfield Court and Shipton Hall. The selection also covers both protestant and catholic chapels of almost every date and style. For each entry there is a brief description based on the author's experience of visiting the property as well as some basic details such as the address, contact details, and current opening times etc. There are also a number of black and white photographs, which sadly don't do justice to the splendid architectural qualities of their subjects, and a scattering of indifferent line drawings.

So, as an idea there is much to commend this publication as a handy reference for those wishing to identify some interesting places to visit with a chapel connection. However there are a number of things that detract from what could have potentially been a super little book. The first is that lack of a proper map locating the 34 houses — so one must immediately search out a road map in order to plan a tour of any length or complexity. The second and much more exasperating problem is the descriptions of the buildings themselves. I have no objection to reading the author's personal observations about the properties — after all the clear evidence of the personality of the author is what makes the Pevsner series so enduringly engaging to readers — but I found some of the entries simply frustrating. The description of Compton Verney talks about the 14th Earl calling in Adam to extend the house but omits to mention which of the four architects of that prodigious dynasty was the one to carry out the work. Elsewhere in the same entry we are told that Mee was 'taken by the brass of Richard Verney's sister, Anne, in her veil, gown and petticoat with her hands at prayer'. The identity or indeed relevance of Mr(?) Mee is not revealed. Unfortunately, there are also a number of other statements scattered throughout the text that left me entirely perplexed as to their meaning.

In conclusion this is a useful quick reference that illustrates some of the wonderful architectural gems of the heart of England but those seeking a more precise architectural or historical overview may be advised to look elsewhere.

Sara Crofts