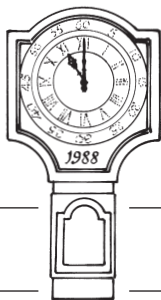


THE CHAPELS SOCIETY



Newsletter 53

May 2013



Rishangles Baptist Church, which features in the book by Tim Grass reviewed on page 16 (Photograph copyright Paul Gardner)

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ADDRESS BOOK

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NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

13 July 2013	AGM and visit to Liverpool (Alan Petford/Chris Wakeling)
28 September 2013	Visit to Taunton area (Peter Daniel/David Dawson)
26 April 2014	Visit to Maidstone (Paul Gardner)

EDITORIAL

Your editor has spent much of his time this month, April, in moving house with its attendant delights, so new starts are very much on his mind. The mailing in which you find this issue of the *Newsletter* also represents a new start for the Society. The first issue of *The Chapels Society Journal* — *Sitting in Chapel* accompanies the *Newsletter*. It marks the coming-of-age, at least academically, of the Society and constitutes a reward for members for agreeing to the recent increase in subscriptions. I hope you will agree that it is both handsomely produced and well worth reading. Please consider using it as a promotional tool to persuade your friends to join the Society!

Also included with your *Newsletter* is the Annual Report and Accounts and the Agenda for the AGM in July. We hope that members from the north of England in particular will plan to be with us in Liverpool in July and contribute to the debate on the future of the Society.

Chris Skidmore

PROCEEDINGS

VISIT TO STOWMARKET, SUFFOLK, AND SURROUNDING AREA, 13 APRIL 2013

The sun shone on the Chapels Society members as they gathered for their spring visit at Bethesda Baptist Chapel, Stowmarket. For two of those present, at least, it was a particularly significant occasion. Our leader, Tim Grass, with his roots deep in the Strict Baptists of Suffolk, used his unparalleled knowledge in the setting up of the day, as his book 'The Strict Baptist Chapels of Suffolk and Norfolk' bears witness. Your reporter, too, has Suffolk origins, but among Congregationalists.

Bethesda Baptist Church was easy to find. Originally built, in meeting house manner, hidden behind houses, it is now clearly visible across a municipal car park. We were welcomed with coffee and biscuits to their well-kept and extended



Bethesda Baptist church, Stowmarket (photograph copyright Albert Taylor)

premises and were given a brief history of the Baptist work there. We were reminded that it was a Strict Baptist church, and were kindly given free copies of their 'Two Hundred Years of Baptist History in Stowmarket'.

All too soon we were on our way, walking to the **Catholic Church of Our Lady**, passing through the busy Market Place and past the United Reformed Church (where our visit was to end). We were welcomed by the parish priest, who told us of the establishment of the Roman Catholic community in Stowmarket in the late nineteenth century, prior to which Catholics had had to travel to mass in either Ipswich or Bury St Edmunds. A determined woman, Adelaide Clutterbuck (she had to be determined with that name!), sister of the rector of the parish, converted to Catholicism, and on her instigation, within a few years, there was a priest, a community of nuns and a school. No separate church was ever actually built, and the parish mass was held in the nuns' chapel on the upper floor. After the Second Vatican Council and the closure of the school, the worship area was relocated to the ground floor. It is a light T-shaped area, with worshippers on three sides of the altar, which had been specially made to accommodate a bas-relief of the Last Supper. That was, incidentally, the only piece of religious art that we saw on the whole day's visit. Before leaving, we were able to climb the steep stone stairs to the original nuns' chapel and admire its fine vaulted wooden roof.

We boarded our coach, and left Stowmarket, passing the Regal Cinema, where the (then) Congregationalists worshipped after the Second World War bombing, and so on to Bildeston, passing the closed chapel at Great Finborough. Parking in the unspoilt square at Bildeston, we were able to admire its fine houses and then take a short walk to **Bildeston Baptist Church**, the earliest surviving Baptist cause in Suffolk, now a member of the Baptist Union.

The Bildeston chapel has an attractive unspoilt exterior, set in a graveyard, but members were in for a shock when they entered it. The interior had been totally remodelled: pews taken out and pulpit removed, to be replaced by a platform, where there was a beautifully decorated Easter cross. We were welcomed by the pastor, and we learned that the church is flourishing. We also learned that when the building was inspected by English Heritage with a view to its listing, they decided that the interior had been so drastically and irreversibly changed that there was now no point in listing it! While we were glad that the church was so flourishing, many were no doubt sad at the destruction of what presumably had been a fine traditional interior.

So on to **Wattisham Strict Baptist Chapel** (it actually declared on its notice board that it was Strict) — and what a contrast, both in theology and visual appearance, compared with Bildeston. Some of the Bildeston members had become associated with the church at Wolverstone, near Ipswich, from which they were dismissed in 1763 to form the Wattisham church. The church, by happy coincidence, was celebrating its 250th anniversary this year and a commemorative history was available. Its author welcomed us, and invited us to explore its superb complex of buildings: chapel (untouched after its last 'modernisation' in 1915, which removed the box pews), manse, graveyard (well kept and possibly the



The interior of Wattisham Strict Baptist (photograph copyright Albert Taylor)

largest Nonconformist graveyard in the country), and schoolroom. An indication of the isolation of the village and its chapel is that mains water and electricity did not arrive until 1954.

We made our way through the grounds to the schoolroom, where a warm welcome awaited us, including, unexpectedly, stands of cakes on the tables for us to eat with our picnic lunch.

The Wattisham pastorate had been vacant for ten years, and, given the strict Calvinist stance of the church, they were finding it difficult to find a pastor. Yet we were impressed by the strength of the community, the attendance at Sunday worship, and the excellent condition of the buildings and grounds. We lingered in the grounds, and some members had to hurry from the graveyard to catch the coach as it left for Needham Market.

Careful preparations had been made for our visit to **Christchurch, Needham Market**, a union of Methodists and United Reformed, in the (originally) Congregational building. We learned that Joseph Priestley, the famed Unitarian and scientist, had ministered there (first as assistant and then as minister), but for only two years. His views had become increasingly radical and he had alienated many in the congregation. The church was, however, now proud of the association and two portraits of him (immediately recognisable) were on display, together with a portrait of the first minister.



A contrast of modest exteriors — Otley (left) and Wattisham (right) Strict Baptist churches (photographs copyright Paul Gardner)

The church was clearly lively, had good premises, had planted a millennium sensory garden, and had ecumenical sympathies, hosting on Sundays the local Quaker meeting in a separate room, the two congregations joining together for coffee after worship.

So on to **Otley Strict Baptist Church**. Again we found a fine complex of buildings: chapel, hall, manse, graveyard (beautiful with primroses) and stabling (now unused) for worshippers' horses. The chapel still maintains the custom of morning and afternoon Sunday services, worshippers having travelled a distance remaining on the premises for lunch.

Again we were given an introduction to the church and its Strict Baptist stance, its Calvinist theology being clearly evident in its attractive Easter leaflet inviting local people to attend worship in the chapel on Easter Day. It should be noted that Suffolk Strict Baptists, whilst Calvinist and believing that only the elect can be saved, none the less believe in evangelising, and that is no doubt one of the reasons for their continuing strength.

Unexpectedly, here at Otley, we were given refreshments, tea and cakes, even including (to the delight of your reporter) the local delicacy of Suffolk rusks — a sort of scone, baked, sliced and baked again until crisp outside. Some members had the recipe described to them. The rusks were all quickly eaten.

We boarded the coach again, and returned to Stowmarket for our final visit to **Stowmarket United Reformed Church** (formerly Congregational). Here we



The interior of Stowmarket URC (photograph copyright Albert Taylor)

entered another world — theologically, sociologically, liturgically and architecturally. The striking building, with tower, is a good example of church architecture in the now unfashionable 1950s. We could have been in an outer London suburb.

We were welcomed with a cup of tea in the Fison Hall, and then sat at our tables for a well researched Powerpoint presentation of the history of the church and its buildings. The church and its satellite churches, of which three survive, now joined by Debenham, has been a strong presence in mid-Suffolk. We were told of the destruction of its building by aerial bombardment in 1941 (the only Congregational church in the county to be destroyed), its exile under the notable ministry of Eric Weir in the Regal Cinema, and the opening of the new church in 1955. Our leader's notes, judiciously said of the interior that it 'perhaps reflects the liturgical interests of some post-war Congregationalists.' There is a chancel, side pulpit, choir stalls facing one another and what can only be described (architecturally) as a high altar. Your reporter noted with satisfaction that the communion table had now been brought well forward, away from the rear wall at the end of the chancel and near the congregation. The effects of the Second Vatican Council have been felt beyond the Catholic Church!

We were treated to an excellent chapel tea, after which our President expressed our thanks to those who had provided the tea, to all the chapels who had

welcomed us, and to our leader, Tim Grass, for preparing and accompanying the visit and for sharing with us his ‘not so much bookish learning but his inner understanding’ of Suffolk Nonconformity. Members stayed behind to explore the building and examine the displays of the church’s history at their leisure.

It had been a unique visit. The composition of the chapels visited (all Baptist, with the exception of one Catholic, one Methodist/United Reformed, and one United Reformed) had been particularly remarkable, in part reflecting our leader’s own interests, but also indicative of the distinctiveness of Suffolk Nonconformity. The warmth of welcome with which we had been received was also indicative of the high regard in which Tim Grass is held by Suffolk Baptists. As we returned to our overnight lodgings, to the railway station or to home by car, we were glad that we had been there. It had been a deeply satisfying day.

Tony Coates

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Paul Gardner writes:

We welcome the following new members:

Richard Benson, London NW5

Reverend Derek West, Ickenham, Middlesex

Can I ask that address changes are forwarded direct to the Membership Secretary please (see page 2 for contact details).

PROGRAMME OF FUTURE VISITS

Tim Grass writes:

After the visits to Liverpool, Somerset and Maidstone detailed on page 2 it is likely that the Society will return to London for the AGM in July 2014 and to investigate the chapels of Islington. Suggestions would be very welcome for the location for a visit in the autumn of 2014. As for 2015, we are looking at the possibility of a spring visit to Edinburgh.

All statements and views published in this newsletter are those of the contributor alone. Neither the editor nor the Society may be held responsible.

EQUAL IN DEATH: THE MORAVIAN BURIAL GROUND

AN ARTICLE BY GILLIAN DARLEY

I pushed open a domestic-looking gate with a symbol of a lamb impressed on the metal, and found myself in a shady, sun-speckled garden, bluebells and late spring flowers dotted between the trunks of mature trees. A sundial stood sentinel at the end of the path and seats were dotted around it. Then I noticed, no more than whispering for attention at my feet, dozens of simply inscribed stone slabs laid flush on the ground.



The scene I remembered photographing some thirty-five years ago is the entrance to the Moravian burial ground at Fairfield, in Droylsden. Looking at the photograph again recently I can see no bluebells but the charm and intimacy of the scene I remembered is accurate. Returning, a few weeks ago, I found the gate and sundial still there, with the grass neatly mown to expose the gravestones and the trees now showing their age. Fairfield, the largest of the English Moravian settlements, was founded in 1785.

Owenite socialism and Fourierist utopianism spawned innumerable experiments in communal living in the early 19th century, flaring up and dying down like so many damp fireworks, leaving behind only vestigial traces,

whether of fabric or their founding ideals. Among religious communities, Shaker settlements stand, deservedly admired for their extraordinary expression of lives ordered far beyond the norm, but the sect has gone. Celibacy was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Among replicable communal ventures only the Moravians have endured.

Fulneck, founded in 1748, was the first such in England. Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys, visiting in 1757, wrote in her journal, 'the situation is charming ... commanding the most delightful prospect.' Mrs Powys noticed three substantial buildings already completed on the side of the hill, 'the centre one is their chapel and house of their clergyman, in which he only and all their children constantly reside. The house on the one side is all for unmarried men, that on the other for the single Sisters, as 'tis call'd'. The school soon followed. Until they built more houses, married members of the community lived in the local village, Pudsey. As early as 1751, the elders noted proudly that the beauty of their burial ground was often cited as 'the reason for deathbed requests for reception' into the Moravian Church. In every location their burial grounds became uncontrived places of calm and quiet beauty, there for the everyday pleasure of everyone. Even more



*An early-nineteenth-century lithograph of the Fairfield Moravian settlement
(copyright the Moravian Church Archive and Library, London)*

than the carefully calibrated buildings, these gardens with their discreet recumbent stones, represented a perfectly codified version of the Moravian communal society.

Their success depended on social and economic order. In many ways the Moravian communities were the embodiment of what Arnold Wesker calls ‘the energy of human aspiration’ in the face of the ultimate impossibility of the utopian dream. The villages were carefully situated within striking distance of large markets for their goods (Fulneck to Leeds, Fairfield to Manchester, Gracehill, founded 1765, to Belfast). Economic self-sufficiency was the object while remaining respectful to the ties and obligations of a close (but not closed) community and their own family bonds. The practicality of the architecture and physical planning mirrored an essential conformity to a shared purpose — but not necessarily conformity in the eyes of the outside world. At Fulneck, visitors soon came to witness ‘the oddness of their worship’ and yet went away charmed by the place, the welcome they received, the women’s dress and above all the glorious music, both instrumental and vocal, which greeted anyone who cared to attend their chapel on a Sunday.

The church of the *Unitas Fratrum*, the united brethren, had been ‘renewed’ in the 1720s, after almost two centuries of persecution. Herrnhut in Saxony was built on land given by Count Zinzendorf, a German landowner and soon to be leader of the congregation. From there, Moravian missionaries quickly fanned out around northern Europe, arriving in Greenland (to stay) by 1733. Every

successive settlement was to begin as a regional variant on that original model — from Christiansfeld in Denmark to Bethlehem in Pennsylvania. At Fulneck, many of the earliest records list numerous German names suggesting that they too had been sent to Yorkshire from Herrnhut.

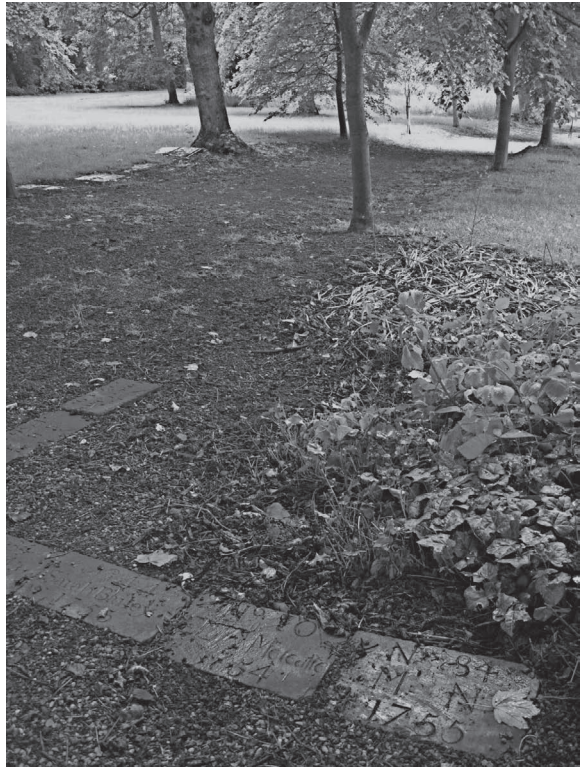
Moravian lives were determined by the church's organisation into 'choirs', the Elders, the leaders of these groups, being the only form of recognised seniority. Family bonds were important but choirs over-rode all. In chapel, women and men sat facing one another. The plan of most of the settlements emphasised an inward turned focus — Fairfield is virtually a square within a square — which looked towards their own occupations and observance, but also outwards, a pragmatic approach which ensured their economic survival and had the benefit of attracting new members.

Moravian burial grounds were equally systematic. Just as the early 17th century botanic gardens attached to Padua, Leiden or Oxford universities depended upon geometry to display and relate taxonomies of species, so the Moravians divided their available land for burial between choirs. In death, everyone lay with his or her peers, rather than in families. The choirs of, respectively, married men and married women occupied two quarters of the ground, those of single men (and boys) and single women (and girls), the remaining two.

At Herrnhut they all lay on a hillside facing east, every individual under an identical stone slab with no more than a name and date inscribed. Zinzendorf's divine botanical garden had been planted against the day of Resurrection. Lying there, in absolute equality, side by side, the congregation waited to rise again on the appointed hour. But there were to be a few notable exceptions. Count and Countess Zinzendorf chose prominence over equality, being buried in substantial vaults below their graves at Herrnhut. The Zinzendorf's former family tutor, David Nitschmann, who became the first bishop of the renewed Moravian church and who founded Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1741 followed suit, considering himself, in Craig Atwood's neat phrase, 'spiritual royalty in the midst of an egalitarian communal society'.

But the wider Moravian congregation followed honourable unanimity in all things. They observed the egalitarian customs and norms of their own society, for example in their dress, 'plain to a degree yet pleasing' and while their contemporaries lived bound by a mesh of intricate social gradations and subtle measurements of class and condition, the Moravians — largely artisans — had effectively absolved themselves from all this in favour of equality in life and death. The Established church suggested that all became equal at death according to common law but the pre-Victorian notion of universal citizenship in the churchyard was flexible at best. A site to the south of an Anglican church was preferable to one on the north, the latter designated for the less virtuous, and so on, with many uneasy variants.

Moravian burial ritual was established around the church hall and the burial ground, God's Acre, so that the earthly congregation moved calmly towards the heavenly. On Easter Sunday, the zenith of the Moravian church calendar, much of the service took place in the burial ground, remembering those who had died over the previous year and visiting family members.



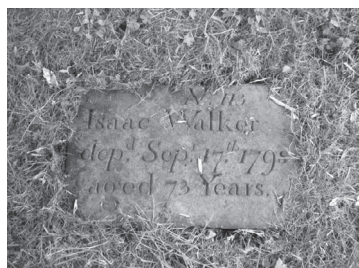
*Moravian gravestones at
Fulneck*

When someone was nearing death, the congregation gathered to sing around the deathbed, and when that individual then ‘fell asleep’ (the preferred term) they were described as having gone ‘home’. The burial within the choir system, rather than with the family, underlined the Moravian belief that they were already in God’s family. Funerals were predominantly musical affairs; a note from a trombone marked a death and the procession, from chapel to burial ground, was accompanied by the playing of cheerful music and choral singing. Everything conveyed a single optimistic message. The dead were simply awaiting new life. Mourning was discouraged. At Fairfield the sundial is inscribed, in decidedly matter of fact wording given the portent of the message, ‘I die today, I live tomorrow’.

In complete contrast, Shaker celibacy and lack of belief in the Resurrection made the afterlife an irrelevancy, leaving their members indifferent to funerary rituals or the place of burial (graves were unmarked). Their society was itself a ‘living building’ and their settlements the ideal physical and organisational manifestation of precisely mirrored, but rigidly segregated, lives.

The image of a paradise garden, the spiritual dimension of a last resting place in a place approximating the Garden of Eden, was enduringly potent. John

Evelyn, a religious Englishman of conformist bent for whom the natural world, that of trees in particular, was divine, hoped to be buried in his own garden at Wotton in Surrey (though he was, in the end, buried in the family chapel attached to the parish church). The persuasive early 19th century arguments for urban garden cemeteries reinforced the imagery of a pastoral place of death, an eventual retreat from the city. But by allowing and even encouraging personal statements on a grandiloquent scale they would become overwhelmed by those trying to steal a march on their neighbours, even in death. No wonder, perhaps, that the Inspirationists, a radical North American offshoot from the German Moravians who had settled at Amana, Iowa, elected to lay out their burial ground on the usual principles but demarcated it with dour lines of cypresses, like heavily lined graph paper.



In every Moravian burial ground around the world each gravestone marked the life of a single member of the congregation, a standard measure of a body. Briefly that graphic egalitarianism surfaced on an ambitious scale in Thomas Jefferson's Land Ordinance Act of 1785, (the Land Act of 1786). The even-handed parcelling of available land into 36 square mile townships, to be broken down into ever smaller square units until 'as few as possible . . . be without at least a little portion

of land' was an essentially democratic and socially just measure. It aimed to reward a free and hard-working people with land, and so provide an equitable measure of their aspiration and energy.

Equally, the Moravian burial ground, whether in Europe or the Americas, was a reflection of the beliefs and guiding principles of a community. Only the elegant, elegiac formality of the early 20th century Commonwealth War Graves speaks to a similar ideal of equality in death, even if entirely at odds with the intensely hierarchical nature of the armed services in life.

It is, then, perhaps worth noting that Fairfield was built in 1785 after drawings signed by the 18-year-old son of the senior figure in the Moravian establishment in England. Ten years later, that boy, Benjamin Henry Latrobe had become an experienced architect and engineer who in 1796 left Europe for North America, to take a leading role in building Thomas Jefferson's capital city. Briefly, the founding principles of a new nation and the patterns established by an idealistic, but well tested, community intersected.

This article is reprinted with permission from *Utopia* [Nottingham: Five Leaves Press, 2012]. The photographs are the author's. Gillian Darley wishes to thank Lorraine Parsons, archivist at the Moravian Church Archives and Library, Muswell Hill, N10 3TJ. She also acknowledges her debt to the following:

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A CHAPEL RE-ORDERING

The reordering of historic chapels is a constant interest of members of the Society. The following item by *Barbara Phillips* reminds us that it is not only a modern phenomenon:

Henry Glenny (1835–1910), raised as a Methodist in Newry, County Down, emigrated to Australia as a young man. He made several visits back to the UK, on mining business. It was in February 1888 that he visited old friends in Liverpool and returned to a Wesleyan Methodist Church he had known forty years before, Pitt Street Chapel. He wrote:

In the evening I accompanied my host's family to Pitt Street Chapel. The great change in the appearance of the interior is noticeable. The top storey and seating are floored in, leaving the ground floor for class-rooms, etc. As it now is, the interior is comfortable and snug. The style is certainly worth imitating in new churches, as the congregation cannot be incommoded by having to stretch their necks to see the minister in order to look over the high hats and feathered furbelows now the fashion.

from Jottings and sketches (at home and abroad) by 'The Australian Silverpen', Belfast, 1888.

Pitt Street was the oldest Wesleyan chapel in Liverpool, erected in 1750 and registered in 1754, replacing a room in Cable Street which had served the Methodist society since the mid-1740s. The church was enlarged in 1765 and had a Sunday School attached from 1785. A complete rebuilding took place in 1803. From the turn of the century Pitt Street was completely overshadowed by the more aristocratic Mount Pleasant and from 1863 when it was detached from the South Circuit and given a separate status was run as a Home Mission. The neighbourhood deteriorated rapidly and by 1875 the chapel, despite the sentiment attaching to it, was grievously in debt and nearly extinct. The re-ordering commented on above was carried out in 1884, with seating provided for 780. Gradually other mission stations took the evangelistic edge from the original chapel and it was finally closed and pulled down in 1905, on the opening of the Central Hall.

NEWS

Books available

Your editor has come into possession of a number of books on chapel and church architecture which originally belonged to Albert Cumberland, one of the Society's founding members. There are a number of the early single-county volumes of Stell; the *Country Chapel* by Hibbs, Vallance on Greater English Church Screens and Cook on Mediaeval Chantries and Chantry Chapels, among others. I am happy to let them go to a good home for the cost of the postage. E-mail me at chrissskidmore@waitrose.com for a comprehensive list or to make an offer.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

The website for the scheme at <http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/index.htm> has been updated to include the details of the revised scheme for refund of VAT on repairs and alterations — payments are now being made monthly. At the end of January, the Heritage Lottery Fund announced a total of £15m worth of grants for 152 listed grade I and II* places of worship.

Wesley Historical Society anniversary

The Wesley Historical Society celebrates its 120th anniversary this year by visiting Epworth, childhood home of the Wesleys, over the weekend of 29-30th June. There will be heritage walks, a memorial service and the AGM and lecture given by the Revd Margaret Jones entitled *Grand-daughters to Susanna: Women's discipleship in Wesleyan Methodism, 1800–1850*. Further details are available on the web site at <http://www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/events.html>.

Manchester Wesley Research Centre

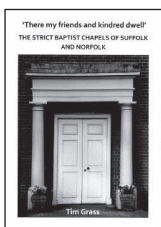
The Annual Lecture will take place on Tuesday 18 June at 17.00 at the Nazarene Theological College, Dene Road, Didsbury. It is given by Prof David Bebbington with the title *Secession and Revival: The Louth Free Methodist Church in the 1850s*.

History of a Waldensian school

Several members will have visited the Protestant chapels of northern Italy not least during the visit to the Waldensian valleys of some years ago, largely hosted by Lucetta Geymonat and led by member Anthony Earl. Lucetta has now written the history of the *Collegio Valdese*, the extremely distinguished secondary school in Torre Pellice, the history of which is of a piece with the chapels. It has been published in a bilingual edition, the English translation by Anthony Earl, and is fully illustrated with some photographs in colour and properly footnoted. The cost is €20. [Lucetta Geymonat, *Il Collegio Valdese — a School bears witness*. Claudiana: Turin. 190 pp. ISBN 978-887016-912-6]

BOOK REVIEWS

'There my friends and kindred dwell' — The Strict Baptist Chapels of Suffolk and Norfolk by Tim Grass. Ramsey, Isle of Man: Thornhill Media, 2012. 156 pp with many colour photographs, paperback. ISBN 978-0-9573190-0-4. £13.00



I was looking forward to receiving my copy of this book for several reasons. Tim Grass is an authority on many aspects of Dissent and that knowledge, together with my love of East Anglia, made for an interesting cocktail of anticipation on my part. And I was not disappointed — this book has a fresh and attractive format, it is lavishly illustrated and the combination of these factors has combined into a valuable yet readable reference book. Until I read this book, I had no idea of the spread of the Strict Baptist message in (mainly) southern Norfolk and the whole of Suffolk. This is because, in Suffolk especially, the Anglican Church faced modest religious ‘competition’ from all aspects of Dissent in the middle of the 19th century.

The outline of this book offers a brief history of the Strict Baptists in these two counties, together with maps of Suffolk and Norfolk, separate page(s) on each main cause, appendices showing membership statistics and a gazetteer summarising the information available on each chapel. There is also a useful bibliography. The map of Suffolk showed just how far the Strict Baptists grew across the county, although I’m afraid that this also made it a little difficult to find one or two locations easily. The decision to start each main cause on a fresh page made the format of the book very clear but two friends of mine noted that this did leave one or two large ‘gaps’, that perhaps could be filled by additional small photographs in a further edition.

The rich colour photographs deserve mention, given that they give a clear indication of the front elevation of most of the chapels: further, selected, photos show the interiors. There are also some pictures of wall plaques, inscriptions, service notice boards and graveyards where appropriate. To this has been added the available history of each cause, together with interesting archive photographs from earlier in the 20th century, showing such events as membership meetings, open air baptisms, as well as a commemorative postcard from 1930. Another fascinating facet of this book is the inclusion of the relevant Ordnance Survey map reference — very useful, especially where exteriors have been modified and the building is no longer used for worship.

My very minor comments aside, this is a book that can be recommended to anyone who is interested in Dissenting history and it deserved to find its way into many a personal library. I feel sure that it will become a standard textbook for those who want to learn more about the Strict Baptists, to add to those well-known books written in the 1950s by Ralph Chambers. It could also be used as a starting point for further study into Dissent in East Anglia. To my mind, we need more books like this one, that tell a story of a particular denomination in a certain area!

Paul Gardner

Yorkshire Methodism: Essays to Commemorate the Jubilee Year of the Wesley Historical Society (Yorkshire) edited by Edward Royle. Wesley Historical Society (Yorkshire), 2013. 116 and xii pp. and 24 figures, paperback. ISBN 978-0-9574933-0-8. £5.00

In 1962 the Yorkshire branch of the Wesley Historical Society was founded with a meeting at Wesley College, Headingley. The college has long since closed, but the branch flourishes. In celebration of the half-century, essays by five widely respected historians of Methodism are now published in this commendable volume.

Alan Rose's essay traces the story of Methodism in Saddleworth, which was part of the West Riding until local government re-organisation in 1974. Here, in an area not well served by the Anglican church, Wesleyanism established strong roots. At Uppermill the Wesleyan chapel of 1811–13 occupied 'a commanding site . . . facing the newly developed civic square' and in 1826 was given a clock and bell tower, paid for by public subscription. Two miles north, at Delph, the first chapel (of 1781) had been replaced by a larger building in 1801, during the ministry of young Jabez Bunting, and a mile to the south the Wesleyans acquired a building in Greenfield in 1845 as that village's first place of worship. Each of these three causes has continued to the present, and Alan Rose ably follows their fortunes with an eye for significant detail.

Colin Dews throws a welcome spotlight on Glasshouses, a settlement near Pateley Bridge in Nidderdale, where from the 1830s the Metcalfe family (of Wesleyan persuasion) developed a major flax-spinning business. As trade increased and the workforce grew, a model village was built incrementally. Comparisons with Saltaire are suggested, although it is not clear that Glasshouses ever had an architectural master-plan. Colin Dews weaves together the industrial



Hutton Cranswick Methodist Church, in the former East Riding, built in 1861, which provides the cover illustration for this collection of essays on Yorkshire Methodism

and religious history of this community, with special emphasis on the Wesleyan mill school and chapel, and continues into the post-Metcalf era, when Methodism — and the village — developed without the family's philanthropic oversight.

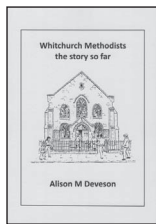
In turning attention to the East Riding, Edward Royle explores the nature of Methodism in essentially non-industrial areas. For much of his essay the Primitive Methodists take centre stage, from their origins in outdoor meetings and cottage services via the age of rural chapel-building to the days of agricultural decline. Most interesting is the study of relationships between Wesleyans, Prims and Anglicans: by the Victorian years it seems that there was a good deal more mutual understanding than has generally been supposed, and unexpected evidence emerges of active participation across the denominational divides. Although the days of 'easy-going parsons' had largely passed by the 1880s, Edward Royle tentatively suggests that the extension of voting rights to agricultural labourers in 1884 may explain the new inclination of landowners to allow more chapel-building.

In his fascinating study of Methodism and local politics in Halifax, John Hargreaves reminds us that Salem, the town's Methodist New Connexion chapel, was known as the mares' nest because so many of its pew-holders became municipal leaders. Systematic research into the history of vestry meetings, poor-law guardians, improvement commissioners and corporation elections has enabled John Hargreaves to undermine the thesis that the town's Methodists preferred to engage with music rather than politics.

The only piece to deal with Yorkshire Methodism as a whole is that by John Lenton, who boldly attempts to assess the importance of Yorkshire in the life of British Methodism, historically and currently. Of course Yorkshire has been very important, and there are statistics to prove the point. It would take more space than is available in this essay — or indeed this volume — to demonstrate the full importance, however.

Christopher Wakeling

Whitchurch Methodists: the story so far by Alison M. Deveson. Whitchurch, Hampshire: published by the author, 2012. 65 pp with 33 illustrations, paperback. ISBN 978-0-9533335-2-3. Obtainable from the author £7.50 plus £1 p&c.



The agent for introducing Methodism to Whitchurch, Hampshire, seems to have been the local Anglican parson, a Mr Wilkins, who had been a college friend of John Wesley at Oxford. He persuaded a local exciseman, Francis Hill, to read Wesley's 'Appeals', overcoming the latter's anti-Wesley prejudice. Hill, 'as soon as it was practicable invited the preachers in connexion with Mr. Wesley into Whitchurch', and it was presumably at his invitation that Wesley himself came in 1759. The early part of the story is overlooked by the author of this history,

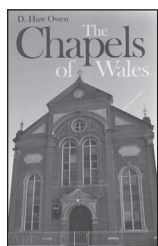
who commences her account, in the conventional manner of many Methodist local histories, with Wesley's visit. She could also have provided more

context for the origins of Primitive Methodism in Whitchurch. Their rowdy reception probably had much to do with the reaction to the recent disturbances caused by the so-called ‘Swing Riots’.

These niggles aside, there is much useful material in this well-illustrated book of interest to members of the Chapels Society. In particular, there are tantalising glimpses of the way that the Wesleyan chapel developed by modernisation, extension, and refurbishment from 1813 to the present day. There are also photographs of the exterior and interior of the new Primitive Methodist chapel of 1902, the building of which probably prompted a scheme to replace the Wesleyan chapel, but which proceeded no further than the completion of a new Sunday school building in 1904.

John Anderson

The Chapels of Wales by D. Huw Owen. Bridgend: Seren Books, 2012. 314 pp with colour illustrations, paperback. ISBN 978-1-85411-554-6. £14.99



Hard on the heels of the publication of *Capeli* by Tim Rushton [reviewed in *Newsletter* 52] we now have another handsome illustrated book on Welsh chapels. Huw Owen has produced a gazetteer of over 120 chapels selected not only for their architecture (although his chief criterion has been their listing by Cadw) but for the important role they have played in the faith, culture and history of Welsh Nonconformity.

D. Huw Owen is a former keeper of Pictures and Maps at the National Library of Wales and a prominent member of our sister charity — Capel. However, in this context he is the author of the Welsh language survey of Welsh Chapels — *Capeli Cymru* (2005) — the research for which has clearly contributed to the present book.

For each entry, the author has provided one or two pages of text together with at least one illustration — usually of the outside of the chapel. The text details the history of both the cause and the buildings involved, with some architectural detail and the name(s) of the architects, where known, finishing with the ‘Present position’ — name of minister, size of congregation and service times — and ‘Further reading’. This comprehensive approach is admirable in a gazetteer of a compact size and would certainly be invaluable for anyone planning a chapel tour in the principality.

The entries are ordered geographically moving roughly from the north-west at Holyhead across the country to Llanvaches, on the edge of Newport, in the south-east [and historically in Monmouthshire]. Yet the survey does not stop here but includes a further nine chapels of the Welsh diaspora — in England (one in Liverpool and three in London), Australia, Canada, the US (Pennsylvania and Oregon) and finally in Patagonia!

There is a real attempt to reflect the variety of theological and linguistic traditions typical of Welsh Nonconformity with examples of both English- and Welsh-speaking causes of the Baptist, Congregationalist (as well as URC and Independent), Methodist and Presbyterian (Calvinistic Methodist)

denominations together with Unitarian chapels, the Apostolic Temple in Pen-y-groes (one of the firstfruits of the 1904–5 Revival), one Quaker Meeting House (The Pales near Llandrindod) and the Salvation Army citadel in Merthyr Tydfil. Some chapels included are no longer at the centre of a worshipping community but are preserved in various ways, including the National Museum of Modern Art, Wales (formerly Tabernacle, Machynlleth), the Acapela recording studio and concert hall (formerly Horeb, Pen-tyrch) and Pen-rhiw chapel, which has been removed to the National History Museum in St Fagans. There is also no neglect of chapels built in the twentieth and even the twenty-first century. These include the octagonal chapels — Seilo, Caernarfon by Gerald Latter of 1976 and St Paul's Methodist Centre, Aberystwyth of 1992 by Cornfield, Crook and Walsh; the uncompromising red brick of Berea Newydd, Bangor of 2003 by the Ap Jones partnership and the more modest building constructed in yellow brick by the Neath Borough Council Training Agency in the 1980s for Tabernacl, Resolfen. Representing the earlier part of the twentieth century is the typically elegant Moreia in Llanystumdwy of 1936 by Clough Williams Ellis, architect of Portmeirion, looking more like a school of the period than a chapel: its wide frontage contains only windows, the entrance being in one of the two apses under the gable ends.

The gazeteer is prefaced with an excellent introduction by the author which not only sets out the history of chapel-building in Wales and details the increasing consciousness of the importance of chapel architecture over the last 40 years, including the efforts of Capel and Cadw, but also constitutes a formidable bibliography of the subject of enormous value to the interested chapel historian.

There are many things to praise in this book — it is scholarly, informative, well designed and produced in a format which fits easily into the hand. I would only dispute the decision not to caption most of the illustrations: given the complex histories of many of the causes described and particularly their amalgamations and changes of buildings in recent years, it is not always clear which building is being illustrated. Nevertheless I would heartily recommend it for purchase to any Chapels Society member with an interest in the chapels of Wales.

Chris Skidmore