THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

Newsletter 54 September 2013

The Ancient Chapel of Toxteth, which was a feature of the Liverpool visit (Line drawing by Michael Mackintosh)

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NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

28 September 2013	Visit to Taunton area (Peter Daniel/David Dawson)
26 April 2014	Visit to Maidstone (Paul Gardner)
June/July 2014	AGM and London visit (Andrew Worth)

EDITORIAL

I could not let this edition of the *Newsletter* go without a few words in appreciation of the work of Chris Wakeling, who stood down as President of the Society at the AGM. The past six years have been very productive ones for the Society, with an active publication programme culminating in the new *Journal*, with the introduction of a successful programme of conferences and a growing awareness of the work of the Society amongst other bodies. In all these areas Chris has been at the forefront, both in getting down to work himself and in encouraging others to become involved.

Chris not only has a wealth of knowledge about the architecture and history of chapels but also a wide range of contacts in academic and heritage circles, and all these he has put at the service of the Society. We shall certainly miss his sage and well-considered advice in the Council. Although Chris is unstinting in his praise of colleagues, he prefers not to receive it himself, being by nature 'diffident, modest and shy'. I trust he will forgive this well-deserved panegyric and accept, with his usual grace, our best wishes for the future.

PROCEEDINGS

VISIT TO LIVERPOOL, 13 JULY 2013

A sunny and very hot Liverpool was the venue for the Chapels Society trip in July, which featured visits to seven chapels from five different denominations, all within a couple of miles of both the city centre and the Anglican Cathedral, which repeatedly loomed into view. And another substantial tour could be created from the places of worship that were passed but not called at!

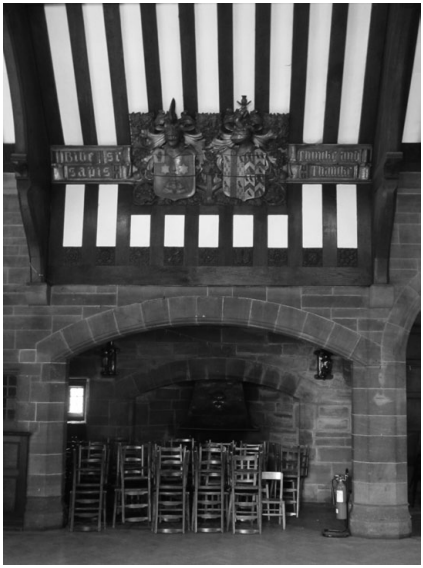
First refuge from the heat of the day was the **Greek Orthodox Church of St Nicholas**, where we were greeted by the priest in charge, who permitted us to use his anglicised name of Father James, but issued a stern rebuke to those in the party who had crossed their legs when taking their seats in the nave for his talk on the origins, development, and character of the Greek Church in Liverpool, for which St Nicholas' was the first purpose-built place of worship, opening in 1870. Then an opportunity to explore, but not into the sanctuary, which in the Greek tradition is reserved for the clergy except for the carrying out of necessary duties, women by special permission only. We could instead view the iconostasis with its traditional quartet of images of Jesus, Mary, John the Baptist, and the patron saint of the church (St Nicholas in this case), and venture up into the gallery formerly used by unmarried women during services. From outside, the domes and polychromatic brick work expressed the Byzantine heritage of the building.

Dovedale Road Baptist Church, in the Baines' 'Art Nouveau neo-Perpendicular style' (photograph copyright the author)

The next stop on the itinerary also had a cross-in-square floor plan, but was otherwise very different from St Nicholas — Dovedale Baptist (also known as Mossley Hill Baptist, or Liverpool Wavertree Baptist) was designed by George and Reginald Palmer Baines, and opened in 1906. The flint and red terracotta exterior and plan here are shared with the former Presbyterian Church on Muswell Hill Broadway (north London) of around the same date by the same architects and provide a striking building and a broad, spacious interior. The semicircle of pews around a central pulpit and baptistery are featured in Chris Wakeling's essay in the Society's recent *Sitting in Chapel* book. Unfortunately part of the nave has been partitioned off with a breeze block wall, but otherwise the interior is largely intact, with pulpit, organ case, ironwork, windows, wood panelling and other fittings all in the Baines' Art Nouveau neo-Perpendicular style. Here we held the AGM and then took either refreshments, or lots of photographs, according to individual taste.

Leonard Stokes' **Roman Catholic Church of St Clare** on Arundel Avenue was long and narrow where Dovedale was square, and although both are 'Gothic' and built less than twenty years apart there was a very different feel inside. Stokes' first major commission is sparely finished inside — except for the glorious altarpiece by George Frampton and Robert Anning Bell which acts as a unifying focus for the interior. There is also an intriguing, slightly tapered, pulpit which fits perfectly with the plain but elegant nave arcade.

The altarpiece designed by George Frampton and Robert Anning Bell at the Catholic Church of St Clare (photograph copyright the author)



The neo-baronial fireplace in the Hall of Ullet Road Unitarian Church (photograph copyright Chris Skidmore)

A short walk along York Avenue brought us to **Ullet Road Unitarian Church**, and an opportunity for a more substantial rest and for eating lunch in the splendid hall which forms part of a church complex which also includes a sort of cloister, of all things. Following our lunch break, we fairly processed (the formality of which was somewhat spoilt by the need to climb over a low wall!) to the west door of the church for our guided tour of the premises. Although the exterior is of red brick, the interior of the church is faced throughout with sandstone. Everything gave the impression of quality and great expense without overt showiness.

After viewing the church proper, we were treated to a tour of ancillary apartments, the vestry and the library, both with some astonishing painted ceilings, including Truth (not quite naked) in the arms of Time, surrounded by an eclectic selection of worthies: Moses, St Paul and Luther expected; Homer and Benjamin Franklin perhaps less so. We then viewed the aforementioned cloister where a large collection of monuments to anyone who was anyone in Liverpool Unitarianism are displayed.

The next stop was the **Ancient Chapel of Toxteth**, also home to a Unitarian congregation but otherwise a complete contrast to Ullet Road. If Ullet Road is

The Ancient Chapel of Toxteth (photograph copyright the author)

The exotic roofline of the Gustaf Adolfs Kyrka
(photograph copyright Chris Skidmore)

'churchy', then the Ancient Chapel is definitely 'chapelly' despite its origins as a chapel of ease within the established church and with the vestiges of a chancel arch just visible. Compact and crowded with box pews and galleries, there seemed little danger of any preacher, however softly spoken, being inaudible, the pulpit being just about within touching distance of every seat. While the photographically inclined members of the party engaged in a sort of Mexican stand-off hoping for some shots of an empty interior, the remainder of us explored the graveyard adjoining and neatly complementing the chapel before going in search of the coach for the journey onwards to our next call.

Alighting from the coach outside **St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church** an excellent distant view of the Anglican Cathedral on the next hill offered itself up, but our goal was somewhat different. The prominent inscription on the front of the church proudly declares its original funding by public subscription and the large proportion of free seats. These are contained within a large 1820s brick edifice, neo-classical in style, complete with Doric porticoes containing the twin entrance porches: all inside is spacious and very light. The galleries are undergoing much needed restoration, but we were allowed to ascend to sample the views and inspect the dominant organ case from close to.

Our last stop before returning to Lime Street Station and trains home was **Gustaf Adolfs Kyrka**, the Nordic Church, named for the Protestant military champion of the Thirty Years' War. Here we were treated to a most sumptuous banquet rather than the advertised chapel tea. An early work of W. D. Caröe for

the Scandinavian Seamen's Mission in Liverpool, but now serving the entire Nordic community, the Kyrka has a fascinating roofline and makes maximum use of the restricted site, with the church itself atop residential and social facilities for the seamen and a pastor's residence adjoining. The church space has now been subdivided horizontally at the level of the original galleries to provide a sizeable room for community events (this was where we ate), but the church is still tall and elegant inside, the eight columns of the octagonal plan ascending via pointed arches to a high wooden vault. And it has blue pews!

So, after a tightly packed schedule, our tour was over, and we returned to Lime Street to begin our various journeys home. I thoroughly enjoyed my first Chapels Society visit, and certainly do not intend that it will be my last.

Stuart Leadley

REPORT OF THE 25TH AGM

The 25th Annual General Meeting of the Chapels Society took place at Dovedale Baptist Church in Liverpool on 13 July 2013. Forty-two members and guests were present and the President, Dr Chris Wakeling, chaired the meeting in his usual swift and purposeful manner. As is our custom, the Honorary Officers gave brief reports regarding the Society's activities during the past year.

The Hon Secretary (Sara Crofts) commented that it had been a relatively quiet year for the Society although there had been a great deal of change in the wider sector with issues related to VAT and heritage protection hitting the headlines on a number of occasions. We are able to feed into the discussions about some of these matters through our membership of The Heritage Alliance, an umbrella organisation that acts as a voice for the sector and is increasingly respected in Government circles. Sara also reported that the new website was now fully operational and continues to grow. Members were encouraged to forward any relevant stories, snippets of information or photographs to her for inclusion.

The Hon Editor (Chris Skidmore) reminded the meeting that the first fruits of our new publications policy had recently been sent out to members. *Sitting in Chapel*, which contains the papers presented at the conference held in Birmingham the previous year, was published with generous financial assistance from English Heritage and sets a high bar in terms of the quality of its content and production. The Council hopes that the *Journal* will prove to be a useful draw for new members.

The Hon Visits Secretary (Tim Grass) noted that once again the year's visits programme had been a huge success with a good geographical spread of visits to a range of interesting chapels. He commented that the Council now has a good system of planning and preparing for visits and noted that there are plenty of interesting trips in the pipeline for the coming year.

The Hon Treasurer (Jean West) gave a brief report on the state of Society's finances, which are looking much healthier since the subscriptions rise had been implemented. She was pleased to see that the small deficit had now been turned into a modest surplus and although bank interest rates remain low, we have been

fortunate to receive a grant from English Heritage to help cover the costs of printing the first *Journal*.

Sara Crofts, Chris Skidmore and Jean West were all willing to stand for re-election as Honorary Officers and were duly re-elected. However, Chris Wakeling had decided to stand down from the role of President after six years. He noted that it had been an interesting few years for the Society, as matters such as implementing the subscriptions rise had not been straightforward. On the other hand, there had been some notable high points such as the 'Sitting in Chapel' conference and the extended visit to the Isle of Man. Chris was sincerely thanked for his effective and thoughtful leadership during his time as President. His hard work and dedication were greatly appreciated and all those present wished him well. Tim Grass was elected as the Society's new President and will continue to oversee the programme of visits for the coming year, as the post of Visits Secretary is temporarily vacant.

Having reached the end of their second term as Council members Paul Gardner and Roger Thorne stood down at the AGM. They were also thanked for their contribution to the Society and especially for leading thoroughly enjoyable visits in their respective parts of the country. Paul Gardner will continue in the role of Membership Secretary for the time being.

For the first time in some years, there were more nominations for the Council than vacancies. Alan Rose had reached the end of his first term and had been nominated to stand again. He was joined on the list of nominees by Martin Wellings, Jennifer Freeman and Peter Ackers. Voting papers were therefore distributed to those present at the AGM and the results of the election turned out to be very close indeed. Martin Wellings was the unsuccessful nominee but by only the slenderest of margins. Alan Rose, Peter Ackers and Jennifer Freeman will therefore take their seats on the Council along with continuing Council members David Quick, Michael Atkinson and Rod Ambler at the next meeting in September.

Sara Crofts

PERSONALIA

The Society's new president, Tim Grass, introduces himself:

Although I have served the society as its Visits Secretary since 2008, a little background might help to indicate what I bring to this role. My upbringing was mostly among the Suffolk Strict Baptists, among whom my father was a pastor. Teenage years were spent with a Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God. I myself served as a Strict Baptist pastor for some years. I have also been in membership with Baptist Union churches, and currently double up as an Anglican Reader and Methodist Local Preacher. To add to the mix, I have long been involved in ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox churches!

Professionally, I studied Theology in Edinburgh and London, completing a PhD in Theology at King's College, London. I am an associate tutor at a Baptist college, Spurgeon's in London, and assistant editor for the Ecclesiastical History

Society. But most of the time is spent writing, my most recent book being '*There my friends and kindred dwell': The Strict Baptist Chapels of Suffolk and Norfolk* (2012). To add credibility (bottom of the class in history at school and without an O-level in the subject) I became a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 2007.

And my interest in chapels? These are buildings which I know, literally, 'from the inside'. Places of worship, places to play, places to imagine and daydream during my father's sermons, places associated with good food and friends — not only the buildings but the graveyards. Personally and professionally I am fascinated by the history of the communities who have worshipped in these buildings, and in the ways that the buildings bear the imprints of those communities in their design, construction and furnishing.

And the following are from the candidate statements offered to the Society by the two new members of Council:

Jenny Freeman has worked in heritage since 1970, after a spell in banking. She first worked for the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and, returning to London, on European Architectural Heritage Year. She later became project co-ordinator/co-author of 'Save the City', a conservation study of the City of London, becoming Victorian Society Secretary in 1982. She has published widely for SAVE, contributed to the book on Kensal Green Cemetery and wrote the book on W. D. Caröe, chapel and church architect, launched with its associated RIBA exhibition in 1990.

Appointed first Director of the Historic Chapels Trust in 1992, she retired last year after taking on 20 highly graded, redundant chapels 'at risk' in England. Most are now happily regenerated, with plans well advanced for the rest. Suitable community activities and occasional services of worship take place throughout the year. Twelve awards have been won for HCT projects. Many scholarly guides to chapels have been published.

She was awarded an OBE for services to the heritage in 2012. Jenny is a founder member of the Chapels Society.

Peter Ackers is an academic at Loughborough University who specialises in Industrial Relations and Labour History. His PhD was a study of the link between trade unionism and religious nonconformity and focused on the British Churches of Christ. Peter was an early member of the society and contributed a piece on the Churches' Wigan chapels. Then he lapsed for a few years before returning again to the fold. He's a practising Anglican and interested at a purely amateur level in all forms of church architecture; being also a member of the Churches Conservation Trust as well as the Wesley Historical Society and the Society for the Study of Labour History.

Peter's main expertise is in the area of working class religion as a part of associational culture and particularly Nonconformity. He's interested in both the 'West End Chapels' populated by the employer classes and the 'Back Street Bethels' (to use Hugh McLeod's terms), which produced many trade union leaders. A crucial reason for preserving so many modest chapels is that they were so central to English history.

THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON CHAPEL, CRADLEY, HEREFORDSHIRE

AN ARTICLE BY EDWARD PETERS

Cradley Chapel, south elevation (photograph copyright the author)

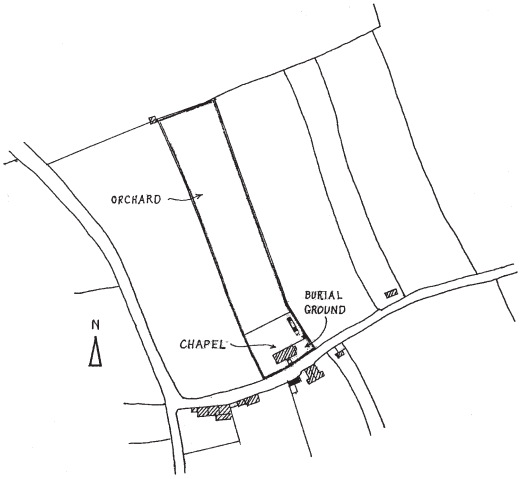
The Countess of Huntingdon Chapel at Cradley in Herefordshire began as a village station related to the major chapel in Worcester, some 9 miles away as the crow flies. The cause at Worcester began in 1769, and was to prosper considerably in the later 18th and early 19th centuries: it began to send preachers out to the surrounding area in the early 19th century, establishing village stations. Some 14 such were being visited by 1832, but their number was to drop dramatically during the next 10 to 11 years, to four. These included Cradley and two nearby chapels. These were Suckley, where a chapel had been built in 1821; Cradley, which followed in 1823; and a further chapel built at Leigh Sinton in 1831. These were within four miles of each other. A chapel had also been built in Malvern in 1827, but quickly became an independent cause. Leigh Sinton appears to have been an independent cause by the time the chapel was built: C. Stell noted that the manse was built with the chapel. By 1851 Cradley, Suckley and Leigh Sinton seemed to have been operating as a group, at least partly served by the minister living at the last. The chapel at Cradley had a stable for the preacher's horse, but this initially would have been for one coming from Worcester. The erection of a separate manse at Cradley in 1927 suggests that it was by then, or at least

intended to be, a separate cause, but by 11 years later Ellis notes that it was being operated from Malvern. There are still services at the chapel at Cradley, unlike that at Worcester and the other two nearby.

The evidence of living accommodation within the chapel at Cradley has led to the suggestion that this was used for the minister, and in one or two publications it has been referred to as the manse. The census returns, however, refer to it as the Chapel Cottage. The occupant appears to have been a tradesman, presumably acting in part as a caretaker. As noted, the chapel was originally served by speakers going out from Worcester.

The Revd G. Bearcroft was said to have been involved with the three chapels for some years when an appeal was made for a successor in 1853: it was he who had made the religious census returns for Cradley and Suckley two years before, giving his address as Leigh Sinton. The return for Cradley notes that there were 140 seats, all free: services were held in the afternoon, attendance 59, only occasionally in the morning. This, and that the service at Suckley was in the evening, suggests that one man was then serving the three chapels. There was also a morning and evening Sunday school, probably run by members of the congregation, with about 25 attending each. A register of baptisms, marriages and burials survives from 1864 for the three chapels (Suckley, Cradley and Leigh Sinton), all covered by the one book, and served by the same minister, who from other sources appears to have been living at Leigh Sinton.

On the occupation of the chapel, the earliest reference is in the list of inhabitants for the village related to W. Jones' map, dated 1834. He notes that John Griffiths was then living there; he was described in the 1841 census as a carpenter and continued to live at the chapel until his death, as recorded in the burial register, in 1865. Thereafter there were different couples recorded in each census return. The accommodation, as will be noted below, was small, probably limited to two rooms and awkwardly arranged for a dwelling. In spite of this two census returns noted three or four occupants.



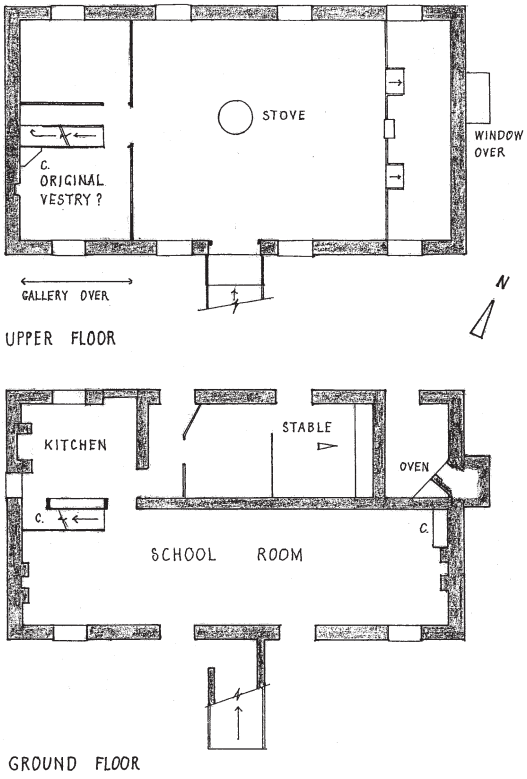
The site plan of the chapel in 1885 based on the 1885 and 1903 maps

The chapel was built at the south end of a long, narrow plot, running back from what is now Chapel Lane. From its shape this was enclosed from one of Cradley's open fields (the Westfield): there are a number of other similar strip enclosures off Chapel Lane. When the field was enclosed was not known. The plot is about 1¼ acres in size, the bulk being recorded as a garden in the tithe award of 1839. Ownership was then vested in Trustees, who owed six shillings and sixpence tithe rent on the site, which was recorded as originally arable. The garden was later to become an orchard. Adjoining the chapel at the front is a burial ground, probably so designed from the beginning, as the earliest person recorded died in 1828, although the monument appears to date from after his wife's death 19 years later. The burial ground was enlarged in the mid-20th century, certainly by 1963, the date of the earliest monument in the extension. The 1903 25-inch Ordnance Survey map shows one other very small building on the plot, in line with the back of the chapel, but against the east boundary. From its size and position, linked apparently by hedges to the chapel, it will have been the earth closet, serving the building. No evidence of it remains now. The 1886 25-inch map shows additionally two small buildings, linked by a narrow yard to the north. Was this a pigsty? This had disappeared by 1903.

The building stands, as noted, at the south end of the site, close to and parallel to the road. It is of two storeys, with rubble walling, of Cradley stone, with brick heads to the openings: the roof is gabled, finished slate, with brick dentil eaves on each side, and chimneys at the ends. The chapel itself is set at first floor

Cradley Chapel, from the south-west, showing the lower storey (photograph copyright the author)

level, approached by an external flight of steps which rise from just behind the gate to the road. Why this arrangement was chosen, with so large a site available, is not at all clear, but it does mean that the building was fairly prominent. Care was taken with the design, the front elevation being intended to be symmetrical, although an early change of plan spoilt this. The side windows to the upper floor have semi-circular heads; all will have originally been sash windows with small panes, as at Suckley and Leigh Sinton. The windows have all at some stage, however, been replaced, probably between the two World Wars, certainly before 1949. The original frames would have had moulded glazing bars, the present are square cut. The porch at the head of the steps is an addition, sometime towards the end of the 19th century, the vertical boarding to the sides contrasting with the panelled reveals to the doorway beyond. Inside, the chapel occupies the whole first floor, with a flat plaster ceiling. At one end is a platform and pulpit, with steps up each side of the latter. This platform had, at some stage, been extended to the full width of the building, over the box pews at each side. At the other end were two rooms with a passage and stairs between, with double doors from the passage to the chapel. Above these was a gallery, with a sloping floor. This last seems to have been a change of plan, made during the construction of the chapel: it cuts across the head of the side windows, the cills to which had therefore to be lowered, cutting down completed stonework. Headroom at the top of the stairs is rather low. Of the two rooms below, only one has a fireplace. One will have been the vestry: in view of the paucity of accommodation it is probable that the other may have been part of the chapel cottage. Whether it was so originally intended is not clear: the chapel at Suckley also had two rooms at one end, both with fireplaces, but with no suggestion that there was ever living accommodation there. Seating in the gallery appears to be original, with open-backed benches. What form the seating originally took in the main part of the chapel is not now apparent: box pews



Plans of the chapel as surveyed in 1979

would have been a little expensive, and may have been limited to the sides of the pulpit. The present pews appear to be later 19th century furniture. The chapel was heated by a stove in the centre, still in use in the mid-20th century. It was set a little off centre in the width of the building, its position indicated by the remains of a metal flue found in the roof in 1979. Its position means that it could be supported by the longitudinal wall in the floor below. By 1913 there was an organ, probably a harmonium.

On the ground floor the school room occupies slightly more than half the building at the front. It had two external doors, one each side of the entrance stairs, but seems always to have been a single room, and was certainly so described in 1851. It was heated by a fireplace at each end: there is also what appears to be an original cupboard at one end. The steps to the chapel above were taken off the other end, a little less than two feet wide to occupy as little space as possible! The floor to the school room was brick paving, which extended also into two of the rooms behind. In the late 1960s the room was also used as the village library, until replaced by the mobile one. At the back were four rooms, each with an external door: only one, the westernmost, was accessible from the school room. This was the kitchen, with a large fireplace in the end wall, access to the cupboard under the stairs, and with a bank of shelves instead of the stone cross wall against the staircase. A pump in the garden was more or less in line with the external door, providing the water supply. There is a door to the next room, but whether this was original is not now clear. A passage was cut off this room at some stage, presumably when the external door to the kitchen was built up. What purpose the second room served is not apparent: it is unlikely to have been domestic, in that it had no window. The partition between it and the stable was a flimsy, boarded one.

The stable still retains the trough for the horses, with three rings for tying them, although even tying two, given the width of the room, would have been tight. The floor is still cobbled. Beyond is a further room, stone paved, apparently with a chimney. At some stage an extension was built against the gable for a bread oven, which appears, from the arch above, to have replaced a window. It was not possible to examine the interior of this room in much detail, because of what is stored therein.

The writer is indebted to the Revd K. Hart, and Mr T. L. Hackling for showing him the building, to Mrs Preston for memories of it since 1949, to Mr M. Peach for access to the drawings and the specification for repairs and alterations made in 1979, and Mr P. J. Cale for information on Suckley Chapel. The following books or pamphlets were consulted: *Huntingdon Hall, Chapel to Concert Hall* by J. M. Knowles, 1999; *Dissenters All* by R. Ellis, 2008; *A Parishioners Account of Cradley*, 1913 reprinted n.d.; *Chapels and Meeting Houses, Central England* by C. F. Stell, 1986; various directories.

Various documents were consulted at the Herefordshire and Worcestershire County Record Offices, and Cradley Heritage Centre. These were the census returns for Herefordshire, 1841–1901, Worcestershire 1851; W. Jones' maps and lists of inhabitants of Cradley 1834 and 1855, the tithe map and award for Cradley, 1839, the religious census for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 1851 and a transcription of the Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials for Suckley, Cradley and Leigh Sinton Chapels, 1864 onwards.

BRETHREN AND THEIR BUILDINGS

AN ARTICLE BY TIM GRASS

Sandside Gospel Hall, Kirkby-in-Furness (photograph copyright the author)

The Christian Brethren (also known as the Plymouth Brethren) have managed to 'fly below the radar' as far as interest in their buildings is concerned. The movement began in late 1820s Dublin as an attempt to return to New Testament simplicity of worship and church order. Plymouth soon became a major centre, hence the name.

Nineteenth-century Brethren buildings are usually rather plain architecturally, the feeling being, as one early leader (A. N. Groves) put it: 'After sufficient space to accommodate the people, there is nothing worth spending a shilling upon in churches.' Worship was 'spiritual', a term which was contrasted sharply with the physical realm: outward show in worship was seen as belonging to the Old Testament era. The evangelistic imperative was urgent, and time spent beautifying buildings instead of preaching the gospel was time wasted, viewed in the light of the approaching Second Coming. And to cap it all, early Brethren, like some other Protestant denominations, did not leave design and building to professionals but got on with the job themselves. Sometimes, too, one almost gets the impression that ugliness — or at least the absence of anything which might give aesthetic pleasure — was considered a virtue. For some years I have been photographing these buildings for a book project, but at times it has been a rather dispiriting exercise!

The interior of the chapel at Clonkeen, Northern Ireland
(photograph copyright the author)

Inside, the ordering was dictated by two considerations. The first was that the main gathering was the 'breaking of bread', at which believers remembered Christ's death in a service which was traditionally unstructured. As with Quaker worship, an individual was free to contribute as they felt moved. Early Brethren also rejected ordination and frequently eschewed formal recognition of leaders. It was widely believed, too, that the meeting was under the presidency of the Holy Spirit. As a result, there was no need for distinctions expressed in raised seating, nor of a pulpit. Chairs or benches were ranged round a table on which were set bread and wine. The second consideration was that Brethren held an evangelistic service or 'gospel meeting' each Sunday evening. This usually followed the Nonconformist 'hymn sandwich' pattern, and so required a platform, a desk from which to speak, and the arrangement of seats to face the preacher. Movable seating was thus preferable, and hence little often remains for the historian or ecclesiological connoisseur.

Even so, the buildings are worth looking at, often because of the way they fit into the built or natural landscape. And some intriguing details can be found: burial grounds whose gravestones bear witness to the animating hope of those buried there, texts in the wrought-iron gates, and stones bearing the building's name and date of construction (favourites were 'Bethesda', 'Bethany' and

Finningham Gospel Hall, Suffolk, beside the London-Norwich railway line, presents an uncompromising message (photograph copyright the author). Another photograph of the Hall was published on the back page of Newsletter 36 (June 2007)

'Hebron'; 'Providence' tended to be left to the high Calvinists, and 'Zion' sounded too grand!). Many of these halls are closing, and I am not aware that many, if any, are listed. Yet they represent the architectural legacy of a distinctive subgroup of Evangelical Protestantism.

NEWS

Methodist Heritage

If members have not yet availed themselves of the free Methodist Heritage Handbook and the excellent twice-yearly Newsletter, these can be ordered from www.methodistheritage.org.uk. The latest (Spring) edition of the Newsletter contained short articles about octagonal chapels and the refurbished Museum of Methodism which opened at City Road in late May.

The Association of Denominational Historical Societies & Cognate Libraries

The Annual General Meeting of our favourite acronym — ADHSCL — will provide an opportunity to view the Museum of Methodism before the business starts at 14.00 on Thursday 17 October in the Lower Meeting Room at Wesley's Chapel, 49 City Road, London, EC1Y 1AU. The Annual Lecture, to be held after the AGM, is by the Revd John R. Prichard and is entitled 'Missions and Societies: the roots and fruits of Methodist foreign missions'. This marks the bicentenary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, which is generally held to date from a meeting held at the Old Chapel in Leeds on 6 October 1813.

The UK's favourite churches include chapels!
To celebrate their 60th anniversary, the Churches Conservation Trust asked 60 public figures to name their favourite church — these can all be found on a website at www.favouritechurches.org.uk. Unsurprisingly, since those asked included Nonconformist church leaders, seven of these are chapels including the Methodist churches at Great Houghton, Barnsley and Otley; the Quaker meeting houses at Cotteridge, Birmingham and Brigflatts, Sedbergh; and North Road Baptist Church, Huddersfield. An eclectic selection indeed!

Tip-up seats not just for Methodists
Member Frank Law writes of his memories of tip-up seating at his home church in pre-university days (following the article in *Sitting in Chapel*). This was the Blackpool Baptist Tabernacle where tip-up seats in red plush were the order of the day. The handed-down story is that the members asked for tip-up seats because they so enjoyed the seating in the Opera House where they worshipped while the new church was built in the early 1900s. The photograph below shows that these seats still survive in the balconies, although giving way to the more flexible chairs downstairs.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Building a Great Victorian City: Leeds Architects and Architecture 1790–1914 edited by Christopher Webster. Huddersfield: Northern Heritage Publications (an imprint of Jeremy Mills Publishing) in association with the Victorian Society, 2011. 419 + x pp with 330 illustrations, paperback. ISBN 978-1-906600-64-8. £25.00 (from the publisher).

In 1876, a reporter for the *The Architect* publication came to Leeds to review recently built property in the expanding and developing city. His comments were enthusiastic: 'There are few, if any, of our manufacturing towns that possess stronger attractions for an architectural visitor... Leeds... stands unrivalled.' He also wrote: '...scarce any commercial town in the kingdom can boast of such long avenues of fair architecture in varied brick and stone...' This book covers the exciting period of 125 years, from 1790 to the outbreak of the First World War, that saw Leeds rise as a major commercial and industrial centre through the activities of enterprising businessmen, politicians and their architects. It traces in particular, the work and initiatives of local architects, from Thomas Johnson and Thomas Taylor through to the extraordinary dominance of Brodrick and Corson and on to the early-twentieth century buildings of the Howdills, and Bedford and Kitson. It is a story of an ever-increasing confidence in the security of an industrial future that will enrich the social, cultural and economic well-being of this northern town.

Inevitably, as the population expands, there are demands for housing, schools, hospitals, churches and leisure facilities that confront the local politicians and administrators. Entrepreneurs and benefactors, as well as the town council, commission their architects to design buildings fit for the new challenges and consequently, against the backcloth of a burgeoning empire, there is no shortage of bold and imaginative projects. The zenith of these achievements is probably exemplified in the work of Cuthbert Brodrick — here is seen the aspiration of new found wealth and enterprise built in stone! His Town Hall, opened by Queen Victoria in 1858, was followed by the magnificent Corn Exchange and Mechanics Institute buildings, all being exemplars of bold structural innovation and high design skill. These achievements raised the pride and profile of the town and, as Simon Thurley suggests in his introduction, put in place the 'building blocks' of an ideal Great Victorian City.

Alongside these significant developments were many other notable works of architecture. From the mid-eighteenth century the rise of Nonconformist church membership was remarkable. The Methodist and the Baptists built many, and increasingly grand, chapels throughout the city. The book contains interesting chapters on the work of James Simpson and the father and son practice of Thomas and Charles Howdill. These men produced some of the best examples of chapel design seen anywhere in the country. As the strength of Nonconformity rose, the Anglican church endured some decline. The retort came in the form of a spate of new church buildings led by, initially, Thomas Taylor and, after his death in 1826, R. D. Chantrell. Although a pupil of John Soane (possibly

Oxford Place Methodist Chapel and Oxford Chambers, Oxford Place, Leeds originally designed by James Simpson in 1835 was remodelled and refronted in 1896–1903 by the firm of G. F. Danby and W. H. Thorp (photograph by Jacqueline Bannerjee reprinted with permission from http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/leeds)

considered the greatest British architect at that time) in London, Chantrell moved to Leeds in 1819 to establish his own practice. He worked on many Anglican churches both designing new buildings and altering many others. His most notable contribution came in the rebuilding of Leeds Parish Church (1837–41) which ultimately made his national reputation.

Webster's book, excellently supported by the well-researched and thoughtful chapters of his co-contributors, throws new light on the development of a significant city and the character of the architects whose flair and business acumen brought about the built environment. The biographical detail adds an overlay of context that releases a wider understanding of the man and the society within which he worked. Whilst the subject of the book is my own city, I can commend it to anyone interested in the phenomenal rise to prominence of the northern Victorian city during the industrial revolution. It is well illustrated and annotated and will serve both as an absorbing historical record and an invaluable book of reference.

David A. Quick

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