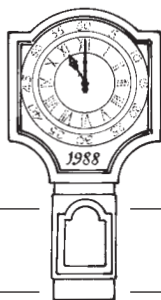


# THE CHAPELS SOCIETY



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Newsletter 55

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January 2014

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*The Friends Meeting House at Long Sutton, Somerset, seen from the rear, sitting within its burial ground (photograph copyright Ian Serjeant)*

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# ADDRESS BOOK

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# NOTICEBOARD

## CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

26 April 2014	Visit to Maidstone (Paul Gardner)
12 July 2014	AGM and London (Islington) visit (Andrew Worth)
Autumn 2014	Visit to Pendle and Bowland area on Lancashire/ Yorkshire border (Chris Skidmore/Roger Holden)
November 2014	Conference on 20th century chapels

# EDITORIAL

There seems to be increasing interest in buildings of the twentieth century [see *News* section p. 16] and members will be eager to have more information about the conference planned for November this year on that topic, which will be in association with the Twentieth Century Society. The programme is being put together by our former President, Christopher Wakeling, and the conference is likely to take place on a Saturday at the Carrs Lane Church Centre in Birmingham. Final details and booking forms will be available in the next *Newsletter*.

A twentieth-century event that will be widely memorialised in the next few years is the First World War and the Society is thinking of what our response should be. Our current ideas are set out by our serving President, Tim Grass, in a piece on p. 8. We encourage members to give these ideas some thought and feed their responses through to the Secretary.

# PROCEEDINGS

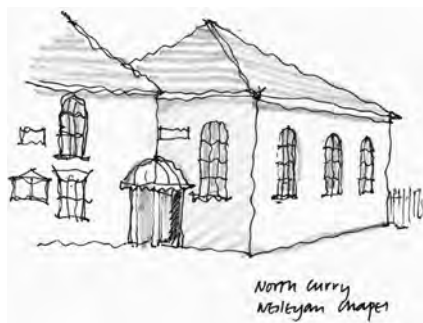
## VISIT TO MID-SOMERSET, 28 SEPTEMBER 2013



The overcast sky and fine rain that greeted our arrival at Taunton made for an unpromising start to the day. Happily, the weather improved and by the time of our arrival at our first stop a weak sun was doing its best to illuminate our tour. North Curry Independent Baptist church of 1825 stands in a somewhat isolated position within its own burying ground. Almost square in plan, the chapel has a pyramidal roof and an open entrance porch.

The front elevation is now rendered although the blue lias is retained on the side elevations. Internally there is a gallery to three sides and a remarkable survival in the form of a cast iron stove. Attached is the former manse of similar date but in red brick. Formerly there was also a caretaker's cottage which would have completed the ensemble but is now demolished and replaced by a rather useful car park. As we sat and took our welcome refreshments we learned something from Peter Daniel of the history and strength of Nonconformity within the county.

We rejoined the coach for the half mile trip down the hill to the Methodist (formerly Wesleyan) chapel at North Curry. Dating from 1833 (1834 according to Roger Thorne!) with extensions of c.1900, it might be described as a typical modest village chapel. It has round headed windows, a 'west' gallery and has been re-pewed at ground floor level. An unusual feature is the curved lead canopy with decorative valence which serves both the entrance to the chapel and the attached schoolroom. Another point of note is that the burying ground contains remains re-interred in 2003 from the crypt of Temple, Taunton Methodist Chapel following work to that building.



We continued our journey passing through Curry Rivel to Langport and the former Congregational (now URC) chapel of 1828–29 and on to the splendid Friends Meeting House at Long Sutton. Erected in 1717 it appears little altered and is said to retain original joinery, including the windows. The shuttered



by William Palmer, whose son founded Huntley and Palmer the biscuit makers. A freestanding, sympathetically designed children's room, erected *c.* 1985, is indicative of these fluctuations. The building sits comfortably within its burying ground with its uniform headstones demonstrating equality in death as in life as a guiding principle of Quaker belief.

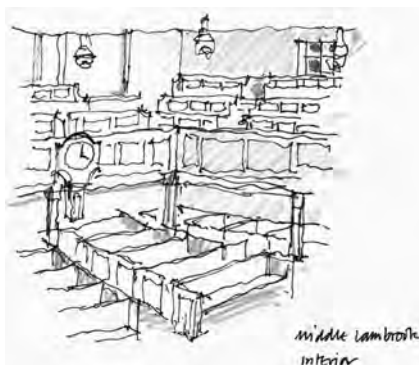
En route to our lunch stop we passed through Martock noting the now disused former Wesleyan chapel by Alexander Lauder. On to Stoke-sub-Hamdon where we enjoyed our lunch sitting in the fine United Reformed church (formerly Congregational) of 1866, by Robert C. Bennett of Weymouth. The impressive scale of the building is literally heightened by the worship area being constructed over a semi-basement school-room. The projecting three-stage tower with its clock faces and a spirelet carried on flying buttresses is a prominent feature in the village. The chapel is designed in a thirteenth/fourteenth-century Gothic style, almost like an Anglican parish church.



What is particularly noteworthy is the relatively unaltered state of the interior. The principal mover in the erection of the chapel was a prosperous local glovemaker, Richard Southcombe whose company still exists in the village. It seems clear that he wished to make a statement about the strength and position of the Congregational church within the village. Not only is the chapel ambitious in scale and design but the adjoining Manse, now a private house, is equally impressive. A church hall of 1875 completes the group.

Returning to the coach we made our way to Middle Lambrook, passing Stoke-sub-Hamdon's Methodist church and the URC church in Martock. We arrived at Middle Lambrook Congregational chapel (now URC) in the middle of their preparations for harvest with the building looking splendid decked out with a wonderful array of local produce. Records indicate the establishment of a congregation as early as 1668 but the new 'Presbyterian Meeting House' was registered in 1729 which is the date on the datestone. The

meeting became Unitarian during the eighteenth century, then Independent and later Congregational from the end of the eighteenth century. The building is of local stone with an ashlar front. The roof, now slated, was originally thatched. The interior retains its original layout with the pulpit (now reduced in height) set between two large round-headed windows against the front wall with a gallery around the other three sides. Box pews to the ground floor and earlier open benches in the galleries complete the arrangement. There is a fine Parliament clock, donated in 1734, on the gallery front facing the pulpit, no doubt for the purpose of informing the preacher of the time his sermon was taking. Within the gallery is a fine collection of oil lamps suspended from the ceiling.



Having earlier passed Alexander Lauder's 1886 chapel at Martock, we now arrived at its twin in South Petherton. Lauder was from Barnstaple and was not only a prolific architect but also a Methodist Local Preacher. He was also the head of Barnstaple School of Art and co-founder of what became the Royal Devon Art Pottery. One of his pupils was W. R. Lethaby who became a leading figure in the Arts and Crafts movement. The Coke Memorial Wesleyan chapel dates from 1881–82. It is constructed of Ham stone cut and squared, with ashlar dressings and a

Welsh slate roof of grey banded with purple. The south-east corner turret and spirelet form a prominent feature on this corner site. The main gable has a band course with 'Coke Memorial Chapel' inscribed thereon. Thomas Coke was a curate in the local parish church from 1770 until 1771 when he was thrown out, almost literally, for his evangelical preaching. He became a close associate of John Wesley and in 1784 went to North America where he was involved in the setting up of the Methodist Episcopal Church, taking the title of Bishop in 1787.

Following Wesley's death in 1791 Coke became Secretary to the British Methodist Conference.

Returning to Taunton we travelled through Ilminster passing the former Unitarian meeting house and the Methodist chapel which sadly had to close because of severe structural problems caused by being built over a large drain.

Our final destination was Taunton Rowbarton Methodist church where a marvellous chapel tea was set out for us. The building dates from 1893 and is typical of its period. It is modest in scale and architectural ambition, but with its later additions and improvements it is entirely suitable for its purpose.

Many thanks are due to Peter Daniel, David Dawson and Roger Thorne for the wealth of information given to us during the day. In addition to the extensive details of the buildings we visited or passed, we learned much about the history, geography, geology, agricultural background and industrial heritage of the area. In all this added up to a most excellent day.

*Ian Serjeant*

*All the sketches are by the author*

## CASEWORK NOTES

*Our Casework Officer Michael Atkinson introduces some of the buildings he has been concerning himself with.*

### **Naunton Baptist Church, Gloucestershire, 1850 (II)**

Planning approval and listed building consent for the conversion of this Baptist chapel were granted in late July. It appears that the congregation at Naunton is dwindling and at such a level that to continue regular worship here is becoming increasingly problematical. The Baptist Union has taken the step to pool resources and form a partnership with Guiting Baptist church nearby.

There is an overwhelming need therefore to find an alternative use rather than to see the chapel slip into redundancy and stand derelict. It is unclear whether a feasibility study has been carried out to find an alternative use for the chapel however the Baptist Union have decided to form two new dwellings out of the existing shell of the chapel and adjacent hall.

Naturally this will bring about a great change within the existing interior worship space of the chapel. The existing organ is to be removed alongside the majority of the existing pews. Some pews will remain *in situ* alongside other ecclesiastical features such as wall-mounted memorial slabs.

Little will change externally, therefore retaining the chapel's value and significance in its landscape setting. A proportion of the existing churchyard will remain open to the public, particularly access to the war memorial and cremation plot.

### **Seven Kings Methodist Church, Ilford, 1905 (II)**

A Methodist church designed by the notable architects George Baines & Son in a free perpendicular style with a strong townscape presence.



Plans for this important church were first brought to the attention of the Society towards the middle of 2012. The current congregation at the time was dwindling and despite strong use by the local community an application for demolition had been submitted to Redbridge Council. Proposals for a mixed use development including flat accommodation, library and café were being put forward with interest from developers.

The application was rightly denied which allowed a process for statutory listing to begin. In May 2013 the church was designated grade II.

The congregation remains small and a friends group has been formed who together are planning to set up a small charity that will work to raise funds and promote use of the church in an effort to keep the church open.

### **The Old Meeting House (Unitarian), Marshfield, Gloucestershire, 1752 (II\*)**

The meeting house is a relatively rare and intact example of a mid-eighteenth-century Unitarian meeting house, especially uncommon in the South-West region. It is designed confidentially in a Classical style, befitting a mid-eighteenth-century Nonconformist chapel.

The high quality interior is a very good example of its type, particularly the distinctive eighteenth-century balconies and wainscoting. Greater context is provided through an attached burial ground and walling.

After falling out of use in the late nineteenth century the meeting house was converted into a reading room and later became a Royal British Legion Hall, the current owners of the property.

In January 2013 the last meeting for worship was held at the Old Meeting House. Citing spiralling costs for maintenance the Royal British Legion subsequently closed the building and as such it currently remains derelict and redundant.

The Marshfield congregation now meets at Trowbridge meeting house. The Old Meeting House remains under possible threat of future sale.

### **Dukinfield 'Old Hall Chapel', Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside, late-sixteenth century/early-seventeenth century (II\*)**

This was once the domestic chapel of Dukinfield Hall and then later a transept of the Congregational chapel (1872), neither of which now exist. The existing remains are somewhat ruinous and the chapel stands in a disused condition. It is currently included on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register.

Works are already well developed to save any further decay and collapse and applications for the consolidation and presentation of the chapel as a managed ruin have been approved by the Local Authority.

Both architectural and archaeological surveys of the building have been carried out alongside emergency stabilisation works. The latest archaeological investigations have uncovered evidence of 'post holes' within the nave of the chapel which suggest evidence of an earlier building than the Tudor ruin visible today.

Much good work continues to be carried out by The Friends of Dukinfield Old Hall Chapel formed in November 2011 to raise awareness of the historical value and significance of the chapel and promote, protect and preserve its heritage.

#### **Birdhopcraig URC, Rochester, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1826 (II)**

United Reformed church, formerly Scottish Presbyterian constructed simply of ashlar walling with a Welsh slate roof over two storeys, 3 × 3 bays.

The church has stood vacant since 2005 and under private ownership. Many significant features remain that speak of the history and significance of the Scottish Presbyterians and United Reformed Church within Northumberland.

Change of use and listed building consent applications were placed with Northumberland National Park earlier this year for conversion into a residential dwelling for holiday accommodation purposes. This application was never determined and withdrawn by the applicant.

A revised application has recently been received by the local authority that looks to make great changes to the internal character and aesthetic of the worship space. An existing first floor balcony and preaching pulpit is to remain however removal of panelling and wall memorials together with the insertion of a double door to the rear are proposed.

## **MEMORIALIZING WAR IN NON-ANGLICAN PLACES OF WORSHIP**

The next few years will see a great deal of attention devoted to aspects of the history of the First World War and its impact on Britain. The religious dimension is not being neglected, but the Chapels Society is perhaps well placed to concentrate on a topic which might not be considered elsewhere — the way in which the war was memorialized in non-Anglican buildings and their furnishings. War memorials are an obvious example of this, as are the rolls of honour listing those from chapel or Sunday School who served King and country. There are tombstones, including a number to the designs of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Stained-glass windows deploy a range of biblical and theological motifs to honour individuals who died. And what about pulpit Bibles, communion sets or church furnishings given in memory of those who died? Were such memorials restricted to those with a chapel connection, or did they include others from the local community? As well as surveying the memorials themselves, consideration needs to be given to the ideas which they expressed, the arguments put forward in their favour, the challenges these presented to Nonconformist ecclesiology, and the reception which the memorials were accorded.

Council are looking at putting on a conference, probably not until late 2015 or 2016, exploring these and other questions. We would welcome feedback from members, including offers of papers. Specific case-studies are welcomed, as are wider surveys. Please contact Sara Crofts in the first instance.

*Tim Grass*



# FIRST FIND YOUR BARN: INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOLDING QUAKER MEETINGS IN TEMPORARY PREMISES

AN ARTICLE BY CHRIS SKIDMORE

It is well known that open-air preaching and worship services were widespread practices among dissenters in the seventeenth century particularly among the Quakers and the Covenanters of lowland Scotland. Open-air preaching was also a feature of the practice of the Wesleys, Whitehead and other itinerant preachers during the evangelical phase of Methodism. Sometimes such meetings were held in inn yards, in the inns themselves or in other buildings.

It is not so well known that throughout the eighteenth and into the early nineteenth century, despite their often silent meetings for worship, Quakers kept up the practice of preaching to those they would have referred to as 'the world's people'. This task was laid on travelling ministers, Friends, both men and women, who were recorded by their meetings as having a special gift for vocal ministry and who were supported in travelling around the country, and also to Ireland and overseas, with the combined task of enheartening local Quaker meetings and evangelising non-Quakers.

If a travelling minister visited a Quaker meeting it might be decided after prayerful consideration that the time was ripe for an 'opportunity', as they were known, to be held in that or a neighbouring town, often on the following day. Such meetings were popular events in country towns where there may have been little other entertainment available, especially if a woman Friend might preach. So the meeting house itself was often of insufficient size and another meeting place had to be selected and fitted up as appropriate at fairly short notice.

In 1820 William Alexander, a York Friend and publisher included in his book *Observations on the construction and fitting up of Meeting Houses, &c. for Public Worship...* a section of advice for those Friends called to this service of fitting 'up places for public worship, as mere temporary accommodations, wanted only for the holding of a single meeting.' Five years later he reprinted just this section as a duodecimo pamphlet entitled *Remarks on Temporary Accommodations for Holding Meetings for Worship*, at threepence a copy, with the following explanation:

In treating on 'The Construction and Fitting up of Meeting Houses, &c. for Public Worship,' the author was naturally led to notice 'Temporary Accommodations,' as well as those of a more permanent nature. As however, many individuals have to provide 'Temporary Accommodations,' and sometimes at a very short notice, it has been thought desirable to print these Observations by themselves, and consequently in a portable form; by which means they may prove a useful companion to those who undertake to fit up Rooms, Barns, or other places for Meetings for Worship, either for a single time or for occasional use. With this in view the present manual is printed; extracted, with some slight variations from the former work.

What follows gives a very good impression of what such accommodation might have been like. It is in fascinating detail, although Alexander owns that 'some of these matters may appear very trivial'. However given the time allowed and the inexperience of those doing the work he points out that, 'even little matters which tend to *expedite the work*, or promote the *comfortable* accommodation of those assembled, it will be allowed, assume a degree of importance, which entitles them to notice.' The room itself is most likely to be a barn, for they:

furnish decidedly the most desirable accommodations, being lofty, and not so liable to the excessive heat which is a frequent attendant on other crowded rooms. Granaries, warehouses, school-rooms, large coach-houses, and other offices or outbuildings, may also be found, that are very eligible; and in general will be preferred to a room at an Inn.

He warns against the use of upper floors or a room over a cellar without knowledge of their capability to support a crowded assembly. The furnishings are then described, concentrating on the stand (or minister's gallery), the seating, any gallery accommodation and lighting. Always the attitude is one of make do and mend:

A carpenter's or other workman's bench, with a little addition to make it 3½ feet wide, or *not less* than 3¼ feet, often affords a ready means of forming the Stand: and two upright pieces nailed to it in front, furnish supports to the *hand rail*, which should be THREE feet from the floor of the stand. — A light rail should be nailed 15 or 18 inches lower, over which some kind of a cloth may be hung to inclose the *bottom* part of the front. The cloth should *not* be hung on the *hand rail*, as it then hides too much from view those who sit upon the Stand. In rooms, a table may often be converted into a Stand. Chairs furnish the Stand with seats the most readily in any situation: and another chair will serve as a step to ascend it.

Seats for the attenders should be made out of boards 1½ to 3 inches thick, if thinner they can be supported by a horizontal ladder. Chairs can be used as bearers 'provided care be taken to lay the weight *immediately over* the legs and *not on the frame*.' Alternatives are suggested: 'knives for wheels, empty butter firkins, or half firkins, well hooped, will also supply bearers' or small trestles can be made from scratch 'if time permit'.

The space for the seats in rows should be two feet, if *chairs* are used for *bearers*. If the supporters are not more than 10 to 12 inches in breadth, 22 inches for seat and space will do very well; and even rather less on an emergency; but on such occasions, the seats should be 20 inches high. In country places, where people are not used to sedentary employment, the bottom of a room for one fourth or one third of it, may often be left unseated to advantage, as it accommodates many more in the same space; and in a long room, many are disposed to stand at the lower end.

The advantages of a raised gallery at the rear can be obtained if 'it not unfrequently occurs in barns, that a stable or cow-house is taken off from one end,

and the top boarded to form a hay loft, which lies open to the barn.' Two or three rows of seats can be placed there, the rear ones being higher than those in front. There are two very particular provisos: 'No *hand rail* will be requisite: but if one be put up, it ought to be VERY SECURELY done, or people may trust to it, and accidents ensue.' 'If a ladder be the best means of ascent to such a gallery, this portion of accommodation should be allotted to the male part of the congregation.'

Galleries were always a touchy subject amongst Friends and there are many reports of their collapse under too great a press. There is even a poetic account of the collapse of a gallery erected within the tennis court at Chester in April 1739 for the holding of a yearly meeting for the northern counties. The first few lines summarise the situation:

At Chester to the Tennis Court,  
Our Yearly Meeting did resort:  
The Gospel Bells were sounded there  
Each star does in its orb appear  
A miracle there happened then  
Amongst a multitude of Men;  
Some Benches from aloft did fall,  
The People are not hurt at all.

We must hope that anyone trusting himself to temporary accommodation constructed following William Alexander's advice, with his exemplary attention to detail, was similarly preserved.

## SOME CHAPELS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

The Society was contacted recently by Graham Johnson of Portland, New South Wales, an architect with an interest in Nonconformist buildings. He describes a situation familiar to us of declining church attendances and an increasing redundancy of chapel buildings but, he believes, with less interest in the Nonconformist heritage than in Britain.

Portland is a small country town 925m up in the Central Tablelands about 150km west of Sydney, and for 90 years from 1902 the site of an important cement works, the first in Australia.

This shows the Portland chapel of the Uniting Church, built in 1906, where Graham himself worships. The Uniting



Church is a 1977 merger of the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia, which represents the third largest Christian denomination in Australia with around 2800 congregations. As with many such unions, there were congregations, often the most conservative, who remained outside and the Continuing Presbyterian church, representing about 700 congregations, has a number of chapels in the area.



The one above is that in Portland, built 1915, but that in nearby Wallerawang (below) is an imposing Gothic structure which has recently been restored. It was originally built by a private patron in 1881 for a joint congregation of Anglicans



and Presbyterians. It was designed by the Sydney architect Edmund Blacket (1817–83), one of 84 churches, including four cathedrals, designed by him in a 40-year career in Australia.

Another earlier church in Mount Lambie of around 1860 has a more rustic appearance, although well cared for. The large masonry buttresses (there are another three invisible on the left hand side) do not seem necessary to support the present structure and may derive from a previous building on the site.



We are grateful to Graham Flowers for this brief introduction to some Australian chapels which has been illustrated with his own photographs.

*Chris Skidmore*

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

# NEWS

## Chapel and Meeting-House Bells

Chapel Society member Dr Leonard Smith is researching bells and bell-ringing in Nonconformist chapels and meeting-houses in England and Wales, with a view to creating a comprehensive list for the National Bell Register, and would be pleased to hear from anyone who has knowledge of a chapel bell, or any information about it, including details of a date, maker's mark, or inscription. A preliminary list has been compiled using Christopher Stell's *Inventory of Non-conformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in England*, but more examples are coming to light, and there may yet be more to be discovered. If you know of a chapel bell or former bell, or have any information concerning its history, please contact Len by email on [DrLenSmith@lensden.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:DrLenSmith@lensden.fsnet.co.uk), or by letter or telephone at 63 Silverdale Road, Arnside, Cumbria, LA5 0DZ, tel: 01524 762264. Responses will be very much appreciated, even at risk of information being duplicated.

## Collapse of Congregational Chapel, Castle Street, Launceston, Cornwall

News has reached us of the collapse of the Congregational chapel located on Castle Street, Launceston, Cornwall early in the morning of Thursday 28 November. The chapel had been empty for some time and been on the market but remained unsold.

The chapel is a grade II listed building and origins date from 1712 when in use as a Presbyterian meeting-house. Major alterations and external changes in the late nineteenth century were carried out by a new Congregational cause. Most of the details of the original building have long since been lost through these subsequent changes.

Worship ceased to exist at this chapel about thirty years ago. Current members of the congregation meet elsewhere in the town, believed to be in a classroom at St Joseph's School in St Stephen's Hill.



*The chapel in Launceston after the roof collapsed  
(photograph copyright Paul Hamlyn)*

The building consists of a simple rectangular aisleless plan at two storeys in height reformed in a classical style. Walling has a textured finish on stucco plaster. Its principal east elevation is stopped at each corner with tall panelled pilasters, made up of three bays with two tiers of round-arched window openings each of twelve-pane lights.

A central doorway exists with panelled pilasters and round arch head.



It is understood that the roof structure to the front of the chapel collapsed which resulted in the masonry of the side walls being pushed outwards. This has caused the spread of much rubble onto surrounding public land and as such the area has been temporarily closed to allow safety inspections to be carried out.

There is concern over the stability of the remaining standing structure and whether anything of this chapel can now be saved.

More information can be found at the following web links: [www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/Search-chapel-building-collapses-Castle-Street/story-20233915-detail/story.html#axzz2m1gP006p](http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/Search-chapel-building-collapses-Castle-Street/story-20233915-detail/story.html#axzz2m1gP006p); [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-25133266](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-25133266)

If any members have any further information regarding this chapel please do not hesitate to get in touch with our Casework Officer.

### **Wesley Historical Society Annual Meeting**

For the first time, the Wesley Historical Society Annual Meeting and Lecture will take place on the final day of the Wesley Historical Society's triennial residential conference at the High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, EN11 8SG on Saturday 28 June 2014. The theme of the conference is 'Methodism and Conflict' and among the other topics to be featured in the conference programme will be the role of Methodist military chaplains; Methodism and conscientious objection in two world wars and Methodism and the occupation of the Channel Islands 1940–45. Further details can be obtained from the Conference Secretary, the Revd Dr David Hart (1b, Whiteladies Road, Bristol, BS8 4NU; [conferencesecretary@wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk](mailto:conferencesecretary@wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk)).

The Annual Lecture entitled 'Methodist Consciences and the Challenge of the First World War' will be given by Professor Michael Hughes, Professor of Russian and International History in the University of Liverpool and will explore how the Christian response to any situation of conflict or war must necessarily be situated in a clear review of the specific circumstances involved. For further information about the Annual Lecture please contact General Secretary, Dr John A. Hargreaves, tel: 01422 250780; e-mail: [johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk).

### **Methodist Heritage Trails**

The three northern Methodist districts, Newcastle, Darlington and York and Hull, have launched a new heritage trail leaflet, *A Dales journey in the footsteps of John Wesley*. The leaflet traces a journey through the North Pennine Dales made by John Wesley in 1761 and tells how the fires of Methodism took hold among the lead mining population. The trail was launched by Chapels Society member Sir Alan Beith MP and the North East branch of the Wesley Historical Society, who visited two of the historic chapels at Ireshopeburn and Westgate in June. The leaflet can be obtained from Weardale Museum (01388 517433) or downloaded from [ow.ly/p0Wn7](http://ow.ly/p0Wn7) or [ow.ly/p0WtU](http://ow.ly/p0WtU).

Wesley and his early 'helpers' searched out remote communities and transformed the lives of their people. One of these extraordinary evangelists now has his own trail resource — a 36-mile circular long distance walk. Isaac's Tea Trail is named after a miner turned tea-seller, legendary Methodist evangelist and

philanthropist from Northumberland, Isaac Holden. The 'Tea Trail' way-marked route also highlights Methodist heritage sites, including Allendale, Keenley, Nenthead and Alston (where John Wesley preached to lead miners) and includes the location of over twenty rural chapels from as early as 1750. *A guide to Isaac's Tea Trail: hidden heritage in England's North Country* by Roger Morris is available from Allenheads Trust Ltd, Allenheads, Hexham, NE47 9HN, priced £6.00 to cover p&cp. Further information, including a trail leaflet, is available at [www.northumberlandlife.org/teatrail](http://www.northumberlandlife.org/teatrail).

### **Nominate a war memorial for listing**

English Heritage intends to list 500 war memorials over the next five years and is calling on the public to nominate memorials for consideration. It is believed that less than ten per cent of free standing war memorials are presently listed. Guidance on how to nominate a war memorial to be listed can be found at [www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/first-world-war-home-front/remembrance/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/first-world-war-home-front/remembrance/). Further information about war memorials is also available from the War Memorials Trust [see article in *Newsletter* 48, Ed] at [www.warmemorials.org/](http://www.warmemorials.org/).

### **Best Modern Churches**

Recently a competition was organised by the National Churches Trust in association with the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association (EASA) and the Twentieth Century Society to find the best church built within the last sixty years. Over 200 churches were nominated for the competition by the public, parishes and architects: it was open to church buildings or significant extensions to an existing building from any Christian denomination in the United Kingdom which opened for worship after 1 January 1953.

The ten winners included four Roman Catholic churches notably St Mary's Leyland, Lancashire of 1964 (Grade II) by Jerzy Faczynski of Weightman and Bullen and Ss Mary and Joseph, Poplar of 1954 by Adrian Gilbert Scott. The only Nonconformist church to be shortlisted was the adaptation of Lumen URC, Tavistock Place WC1 of 2008 by Theis + Khan [see article in *Newsletter* 43, Ed] The full results can be found at [www.bestmodernchurches.org.uk/](http://www.bestmodernchurches.org.uk/).

### **English Heritage Angel Awards**

The winners of the 2013 English Heritage Angel Awards were announced at a ceremony held at The Palace Theatre in London on 21 October 2013. The award for best rescue or repair of a place of worship went to the Church of St James the Greater, Ab Kettleby, Leicestershire. One of the runners-up was Saltaire United Reformed Church of 1859 by Lockwood and Mawson.

### **Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels**

The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust has received a confirmed grant of £1,025,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels building conservation project. The £1.15 million scheme aims to repair this unusual building and bring the chapels back into sustainable

community and commercial use. The Trust expects to carry out the necessary building repairs and conversion work in 2014.

These cemetery chapels represent a rare surviving example of a design incorporating two chapels within a single building. The associated cemetery continues in use but the two chapels, at opposite ends of the building, are redundant: the Nonconformist chapel was closed in the 1970s and the Church of England chapel closed following a fire in 1993 which caused minor damage to the interior.

For those interested in cemetery chapels there is a book which covers the historical development of the Victorian cemetery and architectural significance of the chapels building, historical events associated with the Lye & Wollescote Cemetery and the social history behind some of the headstone inscriptions. *The Lye & Wollescote*

*Cemetery and Chapels: A Victorian Cemetery and its Notable Burials* by Jean Weston and Marlene Price is available from booksellers at £9.99 or by mail order from the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust ([matthew@wmhbt.org.uk](mailto:matthew@wmhbt.org.uk)) at £12.50 (p&p included).



### Remodelling English Heritage

The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) launched a formal consultation process for the new ‘model’ for English Heritage on 6 December 2013. The consultation document sets out in far more detail the Government proposal, introduced with the 2013 Spending Review, to separate the National Heritage Collection from statutory heritage protection services.

In an ambitious 8 year programme, DCMS sets out a new vision which would enable a new charity, ‘English Heritage’ — responsible under licence for the 420 sites that make up the National Heritage Collection — to become self-financing by 2023. A total of £85 million in government grant would aid this process. A separate National Heritage Protection Service called ‘Historic England’ would continue to act, under the Commission set up by the National Heritage Act 1983 and currently referred to as English Heritage, as the statutory adviser to Government on heritage matters. The separation will take effect in 2015.

The DCMS consultation document is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/english-heritage-new-model-consultation> and ends on 7 February 2014.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Hitting the Buffers: Samuel Morton Peto, 1809–1889, Railway Builder Extraordinaire* by Douglas C. Sparkes. London: Baptist Historical Society, 2013. 202 pp, paperback. ISBN 978-0-903166-41-6. £16-00 + £2-00 p&p (introductory offer before 28 February 2014) from the Revd Stephen Langford, 6 Tracy Close, Whitchurch, Bristol BS14 0SP (membership@baptisthistory.clara.co.uk).



Samuel Morton Peto (1809–89), building contractor, developer, country squire, railway constructor, entrepreneur, Member of Parliament, committed Baptist — a Victorian of phenomenal achievement in a time of industrial giants — but who is now largely lost to view. How could this happen?

Perhaps, while the world of Victorian engineers has been explored in valuable studies, its architectural output assessed in scholarly detail and religious controversies examined in terms of Ecclesiology and resurgent Roman Catholicism, Peto's multifarious contributions fit in no single category. His world of nineteenth-century entrepreneurial development and international engineering contracting is less widely understood. Above all there is the painful issue of Peto's bankruptcy and demise, the threads of which are carefully disentangled.

Douglas Sparkes knits these themes together in a manner that makes comprehensible the broad compass of Peto's career. Moreover he explains convincingly the positive impacts of Peto's Baptist affiliations on his attitudes and activities, exemplified in his enlightened employment practices and broadminded Parliamentary debate.

Having ourselves passed through a period of financial crisis — one that famously brought public downfall to well-known names — we may be in a position to view Peto's personal reaction to adversity with sympathy, even a measure of admiration.

Today, we should recognise our lives are framed by the railway lines he laid down one hundred and fifty years ago: London/Colchester/Ipswich; Southampton/Dorchester; Hanwell Viaduct; Norwich via Ely; Woodbridge to Lowestoft; Lowestoft to Reedham; Great Yarmouth to Norwich; Peterborough to Askern, north of Doncaster; Worcester to Wolverhampton; London/Tilbury/Southend; London/Cambridge/Norwich/Great Yarmouth; the Chester and Holyhead line, and many more.

Peto worked extensively overseas, in Norway, Denmark (three contracts), in the Crimea (thereby expediting military transport), in Canada — notably constructing the Victoria Bridge over the St Lawrence Seaway; in Austria, Australia, Argentina and Russia.

Many of these lines passed through difficult terrain, involving the construction of tunnels, bridges and level crossings, winding through hilly country and mountainous land with narrow valleys, or marshland where stability was difficult to achieve. He had a reputation for efficiency and reliability in carrying out his many contracts and for preparing workable budgets, given the novel circumstances.

Railways were not his all. His firm is well recognised as the contractor for Trafalgar Square, Nelson's Column and the Palace of Westminster. Peto transformed his own Somerleyton Estate in Suffolk. He developed the town, Marine Esplanade, and Outer Harbour at Lowestoft in an impressive exercise in Victorian town planning and port construction. He contracted for rebuilding the vastly enlarged Crystal Palace in South London. London's Victoria Dock was built for the use of the new steamships, the first dock to be linked to the new railway system.

Peto inherited his uncle's building firm, only later specialising in railway construction, then dominating the business by his ability to control large workforces. He excelled in co-ordinating many different trades on site. Large-scale working in this way under one contractor was a new concept but later became standard practice. Through his many years of success from 1836 to 1866 he was famed in England, Europe, North America and Australia, receiving a baronetcy in 1855. Unsurprisingly he was hugely taken with the energy, independence and enterprise of the United States. A natural confidence and optimism were in the end to lead him to financial commitments and unwise involvements, particularly with the ill-starred London Chatham and Dover railway, that, together with the failure of one of his bankers, Overend and Gurney, caused his ultimate disgrace and bankruptcy. He had spread his attention too thinly, with three periods in Parliament where he was active, and as an energetic Baptist and philanthropist.

In his social attitudes and employment practices he was greatly ahead of his time, informed by his Anglican upbringing and later by his commitment to the Baptist cause, though Anglicanism was never deserted. His social conscience extended to the moral and religious welfare of his workforce and tenantry. The Victoria Station Hotel in Colchester became an 'Asylum' for the mentally ill. He founded schools, created missionary endeavours. His workmen were paid weekly, and in cash not in kind as was then a frequent practice. Beer shops on site were disallowed though beer might be brought to work for consumption in time-off; opportunities for achieving literacy and religious education were readily available. There were contributions to sick pay and compensation for injuries and death sustained in the line of duty. His munificence was prodigious in a time when indifference was a norm.

Peto's Nonconformist sympathies were evident in the support he lent to social causes in Parliament such as The Care of the Poor, Dissenting Marriages, Civil Marriages, Anti-slavery, Anti-bribery, Free Trade, and the Burial of Dissenters' Bill (which he moved). Yet he was judicious as well as liberal, unwilling to commit to fissiparous campaigns to disestablish the Church of England for example. He inveighed against financial waste in government.

Even after he was discharged from bankruptcy his charitable and religious activities continued though their scope was naturally limited, his earlier misfortunes constantly dogging his reputation.

Though brought up an Anglican Peto appreciated Nonconformist preachers and attended St Mary's Baptist Church in Bracondale, Norwich. Relations among the denominations were less accepting then than now, so Peto's foray to the Baptists — occasioned by his admiration for its minister, William Brock — is

a mark of his non-dogmatic Christianity. He worshipped in London at Devonshire Square Baptist Church and thereafter decided to found a Baptist church, about the same time he firstly entered Parliament.

This became Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, located in the heart of London at the north end of Shaftesbury Avenue. It is a large, prominent building with twin towers, designed for Peto by John Gibson (1817–92), and completed in 1848. Previous Baptist chapels had mostly been modest and unassertive but denominational confidence, and Peto's, was rising by this time. Bloomsbury Church held 1700 people. It included a Day School and what we recognise today as 'community facilities', and embraced a determined 'outreach' social programme. William Brock became its first minister. A place of worship to this day, the church ably fulfils its original purpose, with an active congregation and an international 'draw'. It successfully hosted an early meeting of POWLink (now the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance), among many diverse activities! Peto also formed Regents Park Chapel in 1854, a mile from Bloomsbury, which attracted a poorer congregation. Gibson went on to design the well-known Todmorden Unitarian Church, now owned by the Historic Chapels Trust.

Peto was a prominent member of the Baptist Union Council and of the Baptist Missionary Society (now BMS World Mission), in 1845. His financial support continued for the rest of his life. Later he moved to Exeter where he became a member of the Baptist Church in South Street, and later still, of Beechen Grove Baptist Church in Watford. His final move was to Pembury, Kent where he established good relations with local Free Church people, assisting the Baptist church, and the local parish church where he is buried.

Douglas Sparkes tells his story with clarity and well-reasoned judgment, positioning Peto appropriately among the great figures of the Victorian era. My only quibble is that his index might have been longer to spare us inevitable rummages!

*Jenny Freeman*