THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

Newsletter 62 May 2016

Gadfield Elm chapel, near Pendock, Worcestershire is the earliest chapel of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (photograph copyright Bob Embleton and licensed under the Creative Commons Ambition-Share Alike 2.0 Generic licence).

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ADDRESS BOOK

The Chapels Society: registered charity number 1014207
Website: http://www.chapelssociety.org.uk
President: Tim Grass, 1 Thornhill Close, Ramsey, Isle of Man IM8 3LA; e-mail: tgrass.work@gmail.com; phone: 01624 819619 (also enquiries about visits)
Secretary: Moira Ackers, 1 Valley Road, Loughborough, Leics LE11 3PX; e-mail: ChapelsSociety@googlemail.com (for general correspondence and website)
Treasurer: Jean West, 172 Plaw Hatch Close, Bishop's Stortford CM23 5BJ
Visits Secretary: *position continues in abeyance*
Membership Secretary: Paul Gardner, 1 Sunderland Close, Borstal, Rochester ME1 3AS; e-mail: pgpaulyg@gmail.com
Casework Officer: Michael Atkinson, 47 Kitchener Terrace, North Shields NE30 2HH; e-mail: info@atkinsonarchitecture.co.uk
Editor: Chris Skidmore, 46 Princes Drive, Skipton BD23 1HL; e-mail: chrisskidmore@waitrose.com; phone: 01756 790056 (correspondence *re* the *Newsletter* and other Society publications). **Copy for the next (September 2016) *Newsletter* needs to reach the Editor by 31 July 2016, please.**

NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

16 July 2016	AGM in London with tour (Chris Skidmore)
16/17 September 2016	Conference (jointly with ADHSCL) on *Nonconformist attitudes to war and peace in the long twentieth century* at Friends House, London
8 October 2016	Visit to Leicester (Paul Griffiths)

EDITORIAL

The mailing which accompanies this issue of the *Newsletter* is a particularly rich one. As well as the Annual Report and Accounts for 2015 and the Agenda for our AGM on 16 July, you should have received flyers for the visits in July (associated with the AGM) and in October as well as full details of the Conference in September and how to book for it. I hope to see many of you on one of those occasions.

However, perhaps the most important of the contents of this mailing is the second issue of the *Chapels Society Journal*. I hope that you enjoy reading the articles in *Building the Church* and that you find something there of real interest: our authors have certainly covered a wide range of topics in chapel history and architecture. I should be glad to hear the opinions of members on how well the *Journal* has succeeded and how it could be improved. Further copies of the *Journal* are available at £15 (inc p&p) and I would be grateful if you would recommend it to friends who might be interested but are not Society members.

PROCEEDINGS

PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE CONSTITUTION

At the Annual General Meeting on 16 July (agenda enclosed with this mailing) the Council is proposing a change to the constitution of the Society. At present the Council has no power to co-opt further members.

The proposal is to add to Clause 5 of the Constitution, the following sentence: 'The Council shall have the power to co-opt up to four further members as they see fit to assist in furtherance of the objects of the Society and the discharge of the responsibilities of the Council. The names of any persons so co-opted shall be notified to members at the Annual General Meeting.'

The Constitution currently defines the Council as consisting of the four named Officers, *ie* the President, Secretary, Editor and Visits Secretary together with six ordinary members. For some time other members who carry out tasks for the Society have been invited to Council Meetings. However their status has been unclear and it seems unsafe that the situation continue for any length of time: hence this proposal. A limitation on co-options is included to prevent the co-opted members becoming a majority of the council.

The Council hopes that members will find the proposal acceptable. Members unable to attend the AGM and wishing to make objections to the proposal should contact the President, to whom any other correspondence on the matter should be addressed.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Our Membership Secretary, Paul Gardner, writes
It is with sadness that we report the death of the following members:
Michael Green, Huddersfield
David J Hall, Cambridge
E Alan Rose, Hyde
The Revd Professor Alan Sell, Milton Keynes
We have pleasure in welcoming the following new personal members to the Society:
Elizabeth Jones, Whittington, Shropshire
Stephen Rankin, Saffron Walden, Essex
Can I ask that you get in touch with me if you have moved house or any of your contact details have changed recently. Many thanks.

E. ALAN ROSE

The following appreciation has been received from Roger Thorne
Alan's passing has deprived our Society of a greatly respected member and a valued member of Council. For some of us he was a personal friend of many years standing.

Alan was brought up in Manchester, eventually moving with Glenda and his young family to Mottram on the edge of the Peak District. This was conveniently accessible to the architectural riches, libraries and Societies that abound in Manchester. Trained as a school teacher, his subject was science but mid-career he changed to history, reflecting his growing personal interests. Later he grasped the opportunity to take early retirement and began a new career as a second-hand book dealer, specialising in Church History. He had a small but very select stock which was sought after.

He was not brought up in a Methodist home but later enthusiastically adopted Methodism, which directed many of his interests. He was good at speaking to people so he became a Local Preacher. Methodism and other denominations have a host of ageing buildings so he developed an interest in these, encouraged by the 'Parish Church' type Unitarian Churches not far away from home and of course, the great Albion Congregational Chapel. In the early 1960s Methodism set up a network of District Archivists to encourage the deposit of old records and Alan, like the rest of us, found treasure indeed in vestry cupboards and even under a stage. Methodist preaching plans are a valuable resource and Alan helped found the Society of Cirplanologists and was its Treasurer. Alan's greatest love was printed books and he formed a remarkable personal collection, including chapel histories from a large area around Manchester. His great interest was the Methodist New Connexion, which was his topic when he delivered the Wesley Historical Society's Annual Lecture in Cardiff. He was Editor of the WHS Proceedings from 1981 until 2011, during which time there was a discernible trend towards the minor Methodist denominations and modern Methodism.

His transferable skills, to use a modern expression, meant that he was claimed by any number of national and local organisations, from singing bass in a choir to conducting a long running evening class in local history. He was an early member of the Chapels Society of course and helped to organise some of our day conferences. To raise funds to preserve the historic Englesea Brook Chapel there is a Book Fair every year and Alan always helped to sort out the torrent of donated books and price the better ones. He was a member of the former Methodist Archives and History Committee and was familiar with the contents of the Methodist Archives, now deposited in John Rylands Library. However, he was not reliant on computers and neither was he a great photographer of chapels. But another friend described him as a 'meticulous and talented historian', which he was. Living a long way apart, 4½ hours on the train, Alan and I met only from time to time but we were friends for many years. I shall remember him for his engaging and unassuming modesty. His many friends in the Chapels Society, too, will remember him with affection and we offer our condolences to Glenda, Michael and Paul.

ALAN P. F. SELL

Alan Sell was a long-standing member of the Society, a minister in the United Reformed Church and one of that Church's most acute and distinguished thinkers and writers. He published over 30 books of history and theology and was the General Editor of the four-volume *Protestant Nonconformist Texts*. Importantly for our Society, Alan was also the inspiration behind the formation of The Association of Denominational Historical Societies & Cognate Libraries and one of its strongest supporters.

THE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE HERITAGE SURVEY

AN ARTICLE BY NEIL BURTON (THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY PRACTICE)

When David Butler published his magisterial study, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* in 1999 he identified 1300 extant and former meeting houses across Britain. Today there are 475 Quaker meetings (congregations) in England, Wales and Scotland and of these 354 have a dedicated Meeting House, while the rest meet in rented premises or private houses.

Hertford Meeting House, built in 1670, is the earliest purpose-built Quaker meeting house still in Quaker use. The building is listed Grade II (picture copyright AHP).*

Quaker meeting houses, like other places of worship, are facing the challenges of declining attendance, changing patterns of religious observation and rising costs, and in many cases these are leading to proposals for changes to the buildings. There has been some concern amongst Quakers about the lack of an overview of what is happening. Two years ago in 2014 the Religious Society of Friends and English Heritage (now called Historic England) agreed to fund jointly a project similar to the Taking Stock review of Roman Catholic Churches, which is funded by Historic England and the Catholic Dioceses.

The Taking Stock study, which has been running since 2004, has provided a great deal of new and interesting information about Catholic churches and their designers in England and has proved valuable as a management tool for the dioceses and as a source of information for Historic England, which has added a number of Catholic churches to the Statutory List as a result.

The Quaker Meeting Houses Heritage Project will provide a survey of all Quaker Meeting Houses in England that are currently being used for Quaker worship. The Architectural History Practice has been commissioned to undertake the survey, which will include both reports on individual meeting houses and a series of summary reports, over a period of two and a half years (2014-2016). Volunteer Friends are also involved in contributing to the project and the results are being made available to the wider public through Heritage Environment Records and the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) website.* The Quakers have extended the survey to cover Scotland, Wales and the Channel Islands and two building of particular significance to Friends: Swarthmoor Hall in Cumbria and Friends House in London.

Besides the usual heritage values like historical and aesthetic significance, the project is considering accessibility, sustainability, management and community use to provide a base-line of information to support better management and appreciation of the Quaker built heritage.

The Quaker movement had its origins in the religious and political turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century. George Fox from Leicestershire was the main protagonist. Rejecting the established Church, he claimed that each person could have a direct relationship with God, hence there was no need for priests or churches (or steeple houses, as Fox called them). The term Quaker was first used in about 1650. Quakers are also known as Friends, and their formal name is the Religious Society of Friends.

The movement emerged in 1652, when large gatherings heard Fox speak in the open air in Cumbria and Yorkshire, on hillsides which are arguably as important to Quaker heritage as the meeting house buildings. Early Friends met together in silent worship in barns, orchards, on hill tops and in each other's homes. Intolerance, persecution and imprisonment were constant threats and Quakers were singled out in 1662 by the passing of the Quaker Act which led to even more imprisonments simply for attending Quaker meetings.

The Act of Toleration, passed in 1689, was an important step towards freedom of worship outside the established Church, and thereafter purpose-built meeting houses began to appear in considerable numbers.

The earliest purpose-built Quaker meeting houses were distinctive for their simple, functional design; built by local craftsmen, they sit modestly in the town and landscape and have a vernacular character. In some cases, an existing building was adapted for a meeting house; Swarthmoor Meeting House in Cumbria originated as a barn and cottage, bought by George Fox and given to the local meeting in 1688 with instructions on how to adapt it for a meeting house, which were widely followed.

Characteristic of many late-seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century meeting houses is a two-room asymmetrical plan where the larger space is a full-height room used for meetings for worship and the smaller space was used for the women's business meeting, often with a loft or gallery above, but there were many variants. Internally, the two meeting spaces were usually separated by a timber partition constructed so that part could be opened to enable Friends on each side to see and hear each other when a shared meeting took place.

Blackheath Meeting House, in 1972, is a striking Brutalist concrete building designed by Trevor Dannatt, the last honorary secretary of the MARS (Modern Architecture Research) Group. The consulting engineers for Blackheath were Ove Arup & Partners. The building is currently unlisted (photograph copyright AHP).

* The reports are made available at http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/browse.cfm?unit=Architectural%20History%20Practice%20Ltd and via the AHP website at http://www.architecturalhistory.co.uk/news/item/case_studies/quaker-meeting-houses

Later meeting houses are much more diverse, and in many cases meeting rooms were combined with classrooms and other facilities. An appreciable number of twentieth-century meeting houses have been converted from private houses, but there are also some striking examples of twentieth and twenty-first century design.

In many cases the burial ground was the first piece of land acquired by a Quaker meeting and many pre-date the building of the meeting house. The first Quakers were either denied the right to bury their dead in the parish graveyard, or chose not to. They began to acquire their own burial grounds, following guidance from Fox, who urged Friends 'to buy decent burying-places' and to 'let them be decently and well fenced'. David Butler, notes that 'nearly half of all burial grounds were acquired before 1700' and many of them were walled, with a secure gated entrance.

The Quaker Meeting Houses Heritage Project will record the existence and condition of all burial grounds attached to meeting houses and note the survival of the many detached burial grounds where possible, though the latter really need to be the subject of a separate study.

NEWS AND NOTES

Gadfield Elm chapel

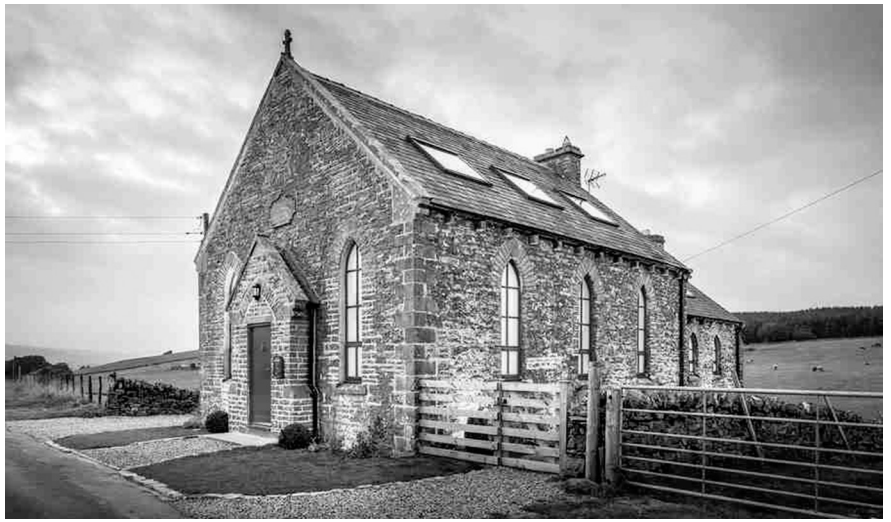
My occasional correspondent Frank Law brought to my attention recently the chapel illustrated on our front cover. It was built in 1837 by the United Brethren, a small group from Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, led by Thomas Kington, that left the Primitive Methodists in the mid-1830s. Mormon missionary and apostle Wilford Woodruff converted almost the entire group in 1840, when the chapel was gifted to the Latter Day Saints. The chapel was sold in 1842 to help finance the emigration of British Saints to America. It was only returned to Mormon ownership in 2004.

Martin Luther Tour 2017

Under the aegis of the URC History Society, and of the Faith and Works Committee of the URC, a tour of Eastern Germany is being arranged for 2017 to see and study the towns related to Martin Luther. The anniversary of his putative counterblast against indulgences is 31 October of that year. In varying degree the Protestant tradition owes a debt to the events which followed. This quincentenary is considered by Germans to have the highest importance. The proposed tour, now at the design stage, will offer nine days covering Wittenberg, Eisleben, Torbach, Naumberg, Erfurt and Eisenach, finishing up in Dresden.

The organiser is Anthony Earl, who has previously arranged a Chapels Society tour of the Waldensian Valleys and of Rutland, and who is familiar with this terrain. The cost will be approximately £990, including flights, some meals, 3 or 4 star hotel accommodation and coach transport.

Members of the Chapels Society who think of joining are asked to declare their interest to: anthonyjearl@googlemail.com .



Chapels become popular holiday accommodation

The *Guardian* ran a feature recently highlighting the ten top churches and chapels which are available to rent as holiday accommodation. Among them was the isolated Chapel on the Hill, near Middleton-in-Teesdale, Co Durham shown above (*chapel-on-the-hill.com*). This former Methodist chapel has the advantage of magnificent views and close proximity to the High Force waterfall.

The same cannot be said of the only remaining tin tabernacle in Chester, erected in 1919 to serve the workforce of the Shropshire Union Canal as a place of worship, which has become the 'Little Tin Chapel', shown over (www.holidaylettings.co.uk/rentals/chester/5143106).

Purists among our members may well deplore these transformations but at least these buildings are gaining a new lease of life and at the same time preserving the memory of our varied chapel history.

Heritage crime expands its range

Members may have missed a recent report in the *Daily Mail* that, after the spate of thefts of lead from roofs, thieves are now turning their attention to London Stock brick. With the bricks retailing at around £1 they can be profitably sold into the reclamation market for reuse on house extensions. Perimeter walls of

houses, churches and cemeteries in East London have been among the earliest victims of this new trend in heritage crime.

Methodist Heritage News

Members may be interested in the Spring edition of *Methodist Heritage News* (available from www.methodistheritage.org.uk/heritage-news-spring-2016.pdf). The current edition includes articles about the Methodist chapel on Fair Isle, Britain's most remote inhabited island, the Methodist Philatelic Society and the bicentenary of the death of Francis Asbury, the driving force behind Methodism in America.

Back numbers available

Our member, A. Pugh-Thomas writes that he is in the process of moving from a large to a much smaller house and is having to dispose of runs of various newsletters and journals including the Chapel Society *Newsletters* 1-59 (but not 55). He would be glad to donate them to an institution or individual, to be collected from his home near Taunton or to be reimbursed postage. He can be contacted at pugh.thomas@btinternet.com.

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

BOOK REVIEW

Fred Rowntree, Architect by Peter Robson. Newby Books, Easingwold, 2014. 112 pages, about 350 illustrations (half in colour), paperback. £18.00. ISBN 978-1-872686-37-0.

This book is a revelation. In charting the life and work of Fred Rowntree, Peter Robson has pieced together the career of a remarkable architect. Chapel aficionados will most likely know Fred Rowntree as the architect of several Arts and Crafts meeting houses (such as those in Hampstead and Hampstead Garden Suburb), and perhaps the Lutyens-inspired Presbyterian (now URC) church at Northwood, Middlesex. Quakers might also know that he designed the garden-suburb-style houses of Jordans village and that he built extensions at almost every Quaker school in England. Rowntree's career certainly benefited from his Quaker connections at each stage, but it was never confined to such patronage, nor was it constrained in its architectural or geographical scope.

Distantly related to the 'chocolate' Rowntrees, Fred was the son of a Quaker grocer in Scarborough, and it was in Scarborough that he embarked on his life's work, firstly apprenticed to a local architect (Charles Bury, designer of the town's Unitarian chapel) and then – after a period with Edward Burgess of Leicester – in partnership with one of Scarborough's well-established domestic architects. With this sound experience under his belt, Rowntree's career took a more adventurous turn in 1890 when he moved to Glasgow (his wife's home city) and became part of the Scottish arts scene. In partnership with Malcolm Stark there was a flow of ambitious designs for public buildings in Baroque, classical and Scots Renaissance modes, and major industrial schemes – including the 29-acre cocoa works in York and a bicycle factory near Birmingham that was soon to become Herbert Austin's Longbridge works. There were also eight commissions for Presbyterian, Quaker and Baptist buildings. For these religious buildings Gothic was generally employed, but for the Quaker jobs, Rowntree steadily moved from strict classicism to more playful variants on post-medieval themes. Even more stimulating during these years was Rowntree's collaboration with George Walton, one of C. R. Mackintosh's circle. The radical influence of Mackintosh's School of Art and tea rooms can be seen in more than one of Rowntree's designs in the 1890s.

With increasing confidence Rowntree began to spread his wings. He joined with an American architect to design for Lebanon the world's fourth humane mental hospital, which opened in 1900. By 1901 Rowntree was in London, practising on his own account, and Robson calls the next fourteen years the golden age of Rowntree's career. There was an increasing number of houses,

in which the influence of Voysey, Lutyens and Baillie Scott can be seen. Some of these came through Quaker connections, and through that route too came commissions for meeting houses and schools across the country. But his reputation grew beyond the Quaker network, leading to impressive new residential schools in Scarborough (Orleton School) and Essex (Ogilvie School). More extraordinary was Rowntree's success in gaining the commission to design the West China Union University in the face of competition from American and Canadian architects. He created what is still considered one of the most beautiful campuses in China (it now forms the Huaxi branch of Sichuan University). His striking ability to adapt to Chinese ways of construction as well as to absorb the traditions of Chinese architectural design resulted in a most impressive estate of buildings.

The war years, by when Rowntree's sons Douglas and Colin had joined the practice, saw the completion of several important projects – especially the Neo-Georgian Presbyterian church in Northwood, which was used as a servicemen's hospital until 1918. At home in Hammersmith Fred Rowntree helped create workshops where Belgian and other war-time refugees were employed in making high-quality furniture and prefabricated buildings. After the war Rowntree designed an Arts and Crafts block for disabled war veterans at Enham village centre, near Andover, and the garden-city-inspired Quaker village at Jordans. Rowntree was not always appreciated by the new villagers. His emphasis on the best materials could be irksome at a time of inflation, and he was accused of attending more to the external appearance than the internal practicality of his buildings. As he entered his sixties, Rowntree's standards were being challenged. Emblematic of his falling out of favour as the Quakers' architect of choice was the competition for Friends House. Rowntree entered the competition, but the prize and the commission went to one of his former assistants, the young Hubert Lidbetter. Much of Lidbetter's work was to continue Rowntree's Arts and Crafts approach, but Friends House famously took Lidbetter into a kind of twentieth-century classicism.

In 1928, a year after his death, Rowntree's drawings and letters were almost all lost in a flood. Despite this, Peter Robson has been able to piece together a wonderfully full catalogue of Rowntree's buildings. Dogged work in record offices and libraries, supplemented by countless site visits, has unearthed dozens of plans and original illustrations, which are reproduced along with a wealth of recent colour photographs. Further research may yet yield a few more buildings, but this admirable book will be the starting point for any future studies of a fascinating and previously unsung architect.

Christopher Wakeling

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