THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

Newsletter 63 September 2016

The current meeting room (formerly the Women's Meeting Room) of Pardshaw Friends Meeting House, Cumbria (photograph copyright Roger Holden).

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NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

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)
30 September 2017	Conference (jointly with the Ecclesiological Society) on the architecture of less-well-studied denominations at the St Alban centre, London.

EDITORIAL

Your editor is grateful that this edition of the *Newsletter* is of a larger size, in contrast to the last issue, the smallest for many years. This is thanks to two interesting book reviews as well as the reports of two of the Society's recent visits. Members may be interested to know that one of the reviews was unsolicited.

This is your *Newsletter* and not all its content has to be commissioned by your editor. I welcome suggestions for reviews of books, old or new, and news items of all sorts. I am also open to articles on your favourite topic, especially if they are accompanied by photographs or good line drawings. The editorial door is always open – surprise me!

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

PROCEEDINGS

VISIT TO NORTH CUMBRIA: FROM CARLISLE TO COCKERMOUTH — 23 APRIL 2016

Members wait outside Lowther Street Congregational Church, Carlisle, for the start of the visit (photograph copyright Roger Holden).

On a bright sunny morning some nineteen members, including Michael Atkinson our guide for the day, congregated at **Lowther Street Congregational Church** in Carlisle. Some of us who had arrived early had been able to view other Nonconformist buildings in Carlisle including Hebron Evangelical Church in Botchergate, which is of Brethren origin, the currently disused Methodist Central Hall of 1922 in Fisher Street, and the Church of Scotland in Chapel Street, establishment they may be a few miles north across the Border but here they are Nonconformists. Lowther Street Congregational Church was built in 1843 for a congregation that had been founded in 1781 by Lady Glenorchy. Previously that had met in Annetwell Street in a chapel built in *c*.1778. Perhaps unsurprisingly for a congregation of Scottish origin the chapel was designed by a Scottish architect, John Nichol of Edinburgh, who was then resident in Carlisle. Some may find the French-Scottish Renaissance façade to be more secular than ecclesiastical. Inside it has a galleried interior, which is said to have been partly refitted in 1864-5 with further alterations in 1901 but little altered since then. The columns supporting the gallery rise the full height of the building to support a barrel-vaulted ceiling. Without actually checking, I took these columns to be cast iron. Christopher Stell however says they are wood, but then the Pevsner *Buildings of England Cumbria* volume, as revised by Matthew Hyde, says 'probably iron'. *Buildings of England* states that Lowther Street now belongs to the United Reformed Church but this is incorrect as the congregation here is affiliated to the Congregational Federation. Carlisle United Reformed Church meets in a former school building on West Walls. However Lowther Street is also home to a separate congregation also affiliated with the Congregational Federation, the Carlisle City Church, which meets in the basement. The basement church has a more Pentecostal or charismatic style of worship than the one upstairs.

The coach tour for the rest of the day was through the comparatively low-lying northern area of Cumberland, bounded on the south by the sudden uprising of the Lake District fells and more distantly on the north by the hills of Dumfries and Galloway across the Solway Firth in Scotland. We proceeded first to Wigton, a small town of around 5000 inhabitants some 10 miles south-west of Carlisle, its centre marked by a gilded memorial fountain. We stopped first at **St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Church** on the eastern edge of the town. This is said to be one of the oldest surviving Catholic churches still in use in Cumbria. At first sight a simple building, on closer inspection it evidently has a more complex history and is surprisingly oriented south-north rather than west-east. The church was built in 1837 to designs by Ignatius Bonomi, the original plan allowed for transepts that were never built, their intended position being marked by blank arches. Then in 1857 it was extended to north and south by one bay for Elizabeth Ann Aglionby who also founded a Convent here for the Sisters of Mercy and provided a chapel for them on the east, at right angles to the sanctuary. This has resulted in there being a step down from the nave into the sanctuary.

Moving into the town itself, we had time to view the outside of the Friends' Meeting House and the Congregational Chapel, neither being any longer in use for worship, before visiting the **Methodist Church** in High Street. The first

The interior of St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Church, Wigton (photograph copyright Roger Holden).

Friends' Meeting House on the current site in West Street was built in 1707 and replaced by the present building, which David Butler describes as 'unusually stylish', in 1830. The Meeting House consisted of two equal sized rooms, divided by a screen which could be lowered into the cellar. Originally both rooms had a doorway opening onto the yard. At some time before 1866 an open colonnade with cast-iron columns was built sheltering the two doorways, which is an unusual feature of this Meeting House. The Independent Chapel, latterly United Reformed Church, in Water Street was built in 1834.

John Wesley first visited Wigton on 30 May 1757. Arriving from Cockermouth he preached in the Market Place at twelve to a large and attentive congregation before setting out across the Solway Firth to Dumfries. By 1828 there was a well-established Wesleyan Methodist Society when the first chapel was built in George Street. By 1881 this was in a dilapidated state and the present site in High Street was acquired for a new chapel, which opened on 2 May 1883. We are not told the architect for this chapel, but it is built of sandstone in Gothic style typical for its age. The Primitive Methodists built a chapel in New Street in 1864, but the congregation amalgamated with High Street in 1957. In 2003 the interior of the High Street chapel was greatly altered in a refurbishment programme. In particular it was turned round so that the platform and pulpit moved to the

Aspatria Methodist Church with adjacent school rooms, built 1929 (photograph copyright Roger Holden).

original entrance side, the doorway facing High Street is now a false door, the actual entrance being round the side.

Departing Wigton we continued in a south-westerly direction a further eight miles along the main road to the next town of Aspatria. Originally dependent on quarrying and coal mining, these activities have long ceased but are featured on the banner of the **Aspatria Methodist Church**, the location of our next visit. Aspatria does not seem to have been blessed by a visit from John Wesley himself and the Wesleyan Methodists do not seem to have had a presence here until 1899 when the first chapel was built on the present site at the junction of North Road and Queen Street, some four years after the Primitive Methodists had built a chapel further east along Queen Street. The present chapel was built in 1929 with a large block of school rooms adjoining almost as large as the chapel itself. The striking thing about the interior is that it does not have pews but tip-up cinema-style seating arranged in a semi-circle, modelled, it was suggested, on the contemporary Central Halls. Some rows have been removed so whereas it originally seated 308 it now seats only 275. There is a gallery on the side above the entrance vestibule, not normally used but it was unlocked for our benefit. The former Primitives eventually joined this congregation in the early 1970s, not without some dispute we were told, and their chapel has subsequently been demolished.

We paused here for lunch and this also gave time to walk up the road to view the former **Independent Chapel** of 1827 in Outgang Road. A small chapel with later Gothic-style porch, the date tablet in the gable carries the text from Luke 15:7 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth'. But alas the chapel no longer proclaims the way of repentance, having long been in commercial use, although currently disused. The photograph of the chapel in Stell shows a rendered and painted frontage, but this has been stripped off at some time to expose the underlying sandstone. The Congregational Church Sunday School building, with date plaque of 1934, stands a short distance away on King Street, now used by a play group.

Setting off from Aspatria we headed south towards Cockermouth, but skirted round the town to head down a narrow country lane to **Pardshaw Friends' Meeting House**. Evocatively set in a burial ground surrounded by trees in the Lakeland foothills, this must be considered to have been the high-light of the day. The midlands accent of George Fox must have sounded foreign in this part of the world, but his proclamation that 'Christ Jesus hath come to teach his people himself' fell on fertile ground in this area. A meeting was settled here in 1653, the first in Cumberland, initially meeting in houses or in the open air at Pardshaw Crag. They built their first meeting house in 1672 and enlarged it in 1705. This stood on the opposite side of the road to the present Meeting House which replaced it in 1729, incorporating some material from the old Meeting House. A block for stables was added in 1731, with a date stone of 1672 which

Members inspect the Quaker burial ground (with the Meeting House in the background) at Pardshaw (photograph copyright Roger Holden).

presumably came from the original Meeting House. A School Room was added in 1745 fronting the road so that the Meeting House is now accessed through a passage between the School Room and the Stables. Finally in 1879 a Carriage Shed was built on the opposite side of the road, clearly by then Friends had so risen in the world as to be coming to Meeting in carriages rather than just on horseback. However, subsequently membership dwindled and regular Meetings ceased in 1923. For many years the buildings were used as a hostel for Young Friends, but this use has now ceased and the Meeting House faces an uncertain future. Currently a Meeting for Worship is held here once a month.

The 1729 Meeting House consists of two rooms, the larger main meeting and the smaller used for the Womens' Meeting. They are now accessed through a common porch but originally had separate entrances. Internally the Meeting Houses are separated by a quite complex screen which can be opened up by the top panels being hinged upwards to be supported by hooks from the ceiling and the lower panels removed. David Butler incorrectly states that the ministers' stand in the small meeting has been removed; it is in fact still there with its central fireplace. The small meeting has benches, believed to be not original to Pardshaw, arranged in contemporary Quaker fashion in a square round a table rather than in rows facing the ministers' stand as they would have been originally.

One of the reasons why Pardshaw Meeting ceased was because Friends had moved into the town of Cockermouth and it was this **Meeting House** that we visited next. Built in 1882, its rather grand Italianate street frontage, which David Butler finds out of place, is a contrast with the vernacular simplicity of Pardshaw. The first Meeting House here was built in 1688 as a more convenient location for Friends from Cockermouth who previously travelled to Pardshaw. This Meeting House was extended at various times, in particular so that it could accommodate Quarterly Meeting, but in 1782 it was demolished and a new Meeting House was built on the site. A century later it was in a considerable state of decay so it too was demolished and the present building constructed on the same site to designs by R.S. Marsh of Cockermouth. There are two equal sized rooms, but alas the counter-weighted screen half of which ascended into the roof while the other half descended into the cellar is no longer extant. Instead there is a solid wall and the rear room is used for worship while the front room is used by a play group. There are no original benches and the ministers' stand has been removed.

The original schedule had promised a chapel tea at the **United Reformed Church** in Main Street, Cockermouth, but alas this was not possible because they were still recovering from damage by floods earlier in the year and we were only able to take a brief look inside. This claims to originate from the earliest Independent Church formed in Cumberland in 1651. The present chapel was built in 1850, the previous chapel which still stands behind in residential use becoming the Sunday School. Stell has a photograph showing the original interior with box pews and north and south galleries, but it was divided horizontally in 1989.

Some of us found time to walk up to Market Street to view the large Wesleyan Chapel of 1841. This became the Town Hall in 1934 after the Methodists had built a new chapel in Lorton Street which we had passed on our way to and from the Friends' Meeting House.

Finally the usual thanks to Michael Atkinson who had organised the day, those who had opened their chapels for us, supplied tea and coffee, and also to the coach driver. Again another splendid visit enjoyable not just for the chapels but also for taking us round a part of the country we might not otherwise visit, reminding us that there is more to Cumbria than the Lake District. The early sunshine did not last, but it did not rain either.

Roger Holden

Bibliography: David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain Vol.1* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999); Matthew Hyde and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cumbria* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); Christopher Stell, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in the North of England* (London: HMSO, 1994).

VISIT TO BLOOMSBURY — 16 JULY 2016

One of the preserved Doorkeeper's Seats in the Large Meeting House at Friends House (photograph copyright Stuart Leadley).

A sunny and warm Bloomsbury area of London was the venue for the Chapels Society trip in July, which incorporated the Society's Annual General Meeting and a walking tour of the district. There are many places of interest in this fairly small area of London, so the distance covered was small.

After an early morning solo excursion to Paddington (of which more later), I joined a couple of dozen or so other members of the Society in the café at **Friends House** on Euston Road. Here we enjoyed refreshments before going to view the Large Meeting House, one of many rooms available for meetings and conferences within the Grade II listed building. As completed in 1927, the Large Meeting had banks of raked seating facing the platform, with galleries on three sides above; it has recently been refurbished into a single unified space with a large rooflight and a single tier of seating, the front section of which is retractable to enlarge the central level area for exhibitions and other events requiring a greater proportion of floor area. Fortunately, many original fittings have been preserved, though some of them have been moved from their original positions. Not relocated are the Doorkeeper's Seats, which are still alongside the various entrances to the Large Meeting. Considering the size of the room (around 1300 seats) the

The conical structure in the centre of Lumen URC as remodelled in 2007/8 by Theis and Khan (photograph copyright Stuart Leadley).

acoustics are excellent; it was possible to hear quite clearly conversations at ground floor level from the rear-most row of seats.

From Friends House we made our way to **Lumen URC** in Regent Square, the venue for the AGM, passing on the way **St Pancras New Church** (Anglican) of 1819-1823 with its caryatids adorning the portico, and the site of a lost chapel in Burton Street. Built on the footprint of William Tite's 1827 National Scotch Church after that chapel was badly damaged by a V2 rocket in World War Two, and incorporating its brick built subterranean crypts which the more adventurous of our party visited, the current church of 1965 was designed by Courtenay Theobald and remodelled in 2007-2008 by Patrick Theis and Soraya Khan. The church now functions as a community centre with a café and meeting rooms. Inside the main body of the church is a conical white structure, which houses a quiet worship area and in conjunction with plywood screens serves to divide the café area from the remainder of the building.

The business of the Annual General Meeting conducted and lunches eaten, we were treated to an entertaining and informative lecture by the Society's President, Tim Grass, on the subject of 'Edward Irving and his Churches'. Ordained in the Church of Scotland, Edward Irving (1792-1834) was minister of the Caledonian

The Church of Christ the King, Gordon Square by Brandon (1851/4) (photograph copyright Stuart Leadley).

The Catholic Apostolic Church in Maida Avenue, Paddington by Pearson (1891/4) (photograph copyright Stuart Leadley).

Chapel in Hatton Gardens, which moved into the new National Scotch Church before disputes about his theological views and the nature of his services led to his expulsion in 1832. Many of his congregation chose to go with Irving, and from them emerged the Catholic Apostolic Church with which he most usually associated.

Leaving Lumen, we headed west towards the British Museum and University College, pausing in Gordon Square to admire, unfortunately only from the outside, the magnificent **Church of Christ the King**, still the property of the aforementioned Catholic Apostolic Church but not used by them. Built 1851-1854 to the designs of Raphael Brandon, the church would have been more magnificent still had it been completed to its full length and the intended tall spire added to the tower. Despite their belief in the imminence of the second coming, the CAC were keen on good architecture and had erected a series of large churches, in London, Bolton, Wolverhampton, and elsewhere. Where these survive they are now used by other denominations even where they remain the possession of the CAC trustees.

The only church currently used by the Catholic Apostolic Church in England is at Paddington, hence my journey there in the morning. John Loughborough

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Avenue (photograph copyright Stuart Leadley).]

Pearson's red brick gothic edifice of 1891-1893 is the only English church designed by that architect for clients outside the established church, and it has been suggested that he may not have entirely grasped the nature of the CAC. It was the last of his large vaulted town churches and features an apsidal baptistery strangely protruding from a deeply recessed archway in the west end. The overall effect however, with the tall nave looming over Maida Avenue, is surely all that the esteemed architect was aiming for.

Our final official calling point for the day was **Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church** in Shaftesbury Avenue, opened 1848. The chapel was paid for by the railway contractor Samuel Morton Peto and had twin spires until they were removed in 1951. It has also lost its neighbours, being originally flanked by the Bedford Chapel and the French Protestant Church, both having been demolished. The independent church was taken over at the end of the nineteenth century by the Baptist Union and the London Baptist Association as a sort of headquarters. At around the same time the building had one of its periodic remodellings/refurbishments/renovations, this one under the superintendance of George Baines; further changes followed in the 1960s and 1990s. The minister Ruth Goldbourne told us about the life of the church, which operates as a social centre and concert venue, as well as hosting congregations of 70-80 for Sunday worship.

We then dispersed, having enjoyed some fine weather and a series of interesting visits. We also enjoyed discussions along the way on topics as diverse as royal mistresses, the uses and disadvantages of light, and the architecture of Charles Holden at University College. Less enjoyable perhaps were the inevitable hazards of busy London streets including buses, pigeons, and other large groups inconveniently trying to occupy the same parts of the pavement as us!

Following the suggestion in the splendidly comprehensive Notes, I diverted slightly from the direct route back to King's Cross for the train home to pass and admire **St George Bloomsbury** (Anglican) with its extraordinary 'spire' featuring King George I atop (and lion and unicorn supporting) Nicholas Hawksmoor's eighteenth century reinterpretation of the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, and to glance at the nearby **Swedenborg Hall**, a rather less pretentious building housing the Swedenborg Society's library and shop.

Many thanks to our organiser and guide for the day Chris Skidmore, to Tim Grass for an excellent lecture, to our hosts at Friends House, Lumen, and Bloomsbury Baptist for their welcome and willingness to answer questions, and to everyone else who joined us, for the good company.

Stuart Leadley

REPORT OF THE TWENTYEIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held at Lumen URC, Tavistock Place on Saturday 16 July starting at 12 noon: over thirty members were present, the President, Tim Grass, in the chair. The minutes of the 27th AGM were agreed and signed. The Honorary Officers made their reports.

The President emphasised the development of joint conferences with other Societies – in September this year with the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries and in September 2017 with the Ecclesiological Society. The Acting Secretary, Moira Ackers, thanked all those who had helped her in her first year: she emphasised the importance of the website to the Society and urged members to contribute pieces to the 'Chapel of the Month' feature. Chris Skidmore, the Editor, drew members attention to the recent publication of the second issue of the *Journal*: its excellence was contrasted with the lack of content in the most recent *Newsletter*, which members were asked to support with more material. The Treasurer, Jean West, presented the Accounts for 2015 which showed the Society in a healthy financial state. The Annual Report and Accounts 2015 were accepted *nem. con.*

No changes were proposed in the level of membership subscriptions. The Council presented a proposal to change the Society's Constitution to allow the Council to co-opt a limited number of members. There was uncertainty however as to whether the co-optees would be full voting members: the resolution was withdrawn.

Elections for the Council were then held. The Officers were re-elected en bloc, Moira Ackers becoming Secretary in name as well as function and Tim Grass beginning a second three-year term as President. In addition to the members continuing to serve – Rod Ambler, Michael Atkinson and Stuart Leadley – Peter

Ackers and Jenny Freeman were elected to serve for a second term and Martin Wellings for a first term.

Christopher Wakeling then asked that members should think of naming the Society in their wills: this was referred to the Council.

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm.

Chris Skidmore

NEWS AND NOTES

Friends of Dukinfield Old Hall Chapel

This is the private chapel of Dukinfield Old Hall, a late-sixteenth century structure which was used by an Independent Congregation from about 1641 (see Stell, *Cheshire* 39: II*). Unfortunately the chapel is in a ruinous condition, unroofed and on the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register. The Friends (www.oldhallchapel.org) are a voluntary organisation which wants to see the building made safe, accessible and a focus for local history: our late member Alan Rose served as chair. They deserve all the support that they can get: members who wish to join (£5 p.a.) can do so by contacting the secretary, Roy Parkes, at roy.parkes1@ntlworld.com.

Monksthorpe Chapel

An ancient chapel in a better state is on the National Trust's Gunby Hall Estate in Lincolnshire. Monksthorpe Baptist Chapel (II*) is a barn-like red brick chapel with a pantile roof built in 1701 for a church that was founded as early as 1669: the interior was refurnished in 1847. As you will see from the photograph (copyright Richard Croft and licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 license) there are accompanying outbuildings and, in the foreground, one of only two surviving outdoor baptisteries in the UK. Occasional services are still held at the chapel by the Friends of Monksthorpe (www.monksthorpe.com).

More news from Chester

Nigel Lemon wrote following the news item in the last *Newsletter* about the tin tabernacle in Chester now converted into holiday accommodation. He has

warm memories of the former Sealand Road Congregational / United Reformed Church, which he preached in many times during his years in Chester. The small, devoted, mutually-caring and very welcoming community is now united in worship with the not-far-distant Garden Lane Methodists. I am happy to note that the original news item gave the date of erection of the building erroneously as 1919 rather than 1909.

Communities of Dissent – a research network

The Society has agreed to become involved in this project which is sponsored by the Family and Community Historical Research Society (FACHRS: see www.fachrs.com). The society was established in 1998, initially by former OU students of courses in social, family and community history who wanted to continue being involved in active research, including shared, major projects done collectively. Current membership is 258 and on average around 50 take part in major projects, each of which has an academic lead/adviser, in this case our member, Kate Tiller.

The network will focus on capturing local evidence and awareness of the role of religious dissent in the past, which is, along with the buildings, being lost. The project seeks to record, or recover a record, of the local buildings of dissent in a particular area – chapels, schools, Sunday schools, meeting rooms, institutes, ministers' houses – and to research and assess the Nonconformist culture of which they were part.

The project is due to start in 2017 and we hope that Kate will be able to write a longer piece in the next *Newsletter,* letting members know how they can become involved.

Dissenting records

The Queen Mary Centre for Religion and Literature in English has just published on-line *An Inventory of Puritan and Dissenting Records, 1640–1714.* This contains details of every church book, account book, and register book formerly belonging to Baptist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches during the Civil War, Commonwealth and later Stuart period. The inventory is arranged both by repository and church location and by denomination. It can be accessed at www.qmulreligionandliterature.co.uk/online-publications/dissenting-records.

BOOK REVIEWS

Dictionary of Dublin Dissent: Dublin's Protestant Meeting Houses 1660-1920 by Steven C. Smyrl. Dublin: A. & A. Farmer, 2009. 358 pages, 7 illustrations, softback. €40.00. ISBN 978-1-906353-15-5.

This is not a very recent publication, but has not previously been brought to the attention of Chapels Society members. Dublin was in the United Kingdom until 1922 and this major political change forms the cut-off for this book. The author explains in his introduction that the numbers of dissenters in Dublin fell precipitously after the formation of the Free State and it was only with the coming of the 'Celtic Tiger' years that this was reversed, with Presbyterians and Methodists showing significant increases in numbers. This book was published as those years came to an abrupt end, so the situation may have changed again since then.

The sub-title of the book defines the scope as Protestant Dissenters, therefore it does not include the Church of Ireland nor the Roman Catholics. The use of the term 'Meeting Houses' in the sub-title is therefore important, since in an Irish context, 'chapel' implies a building of the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless 'chapel' or 'church' is used for some of the buildings discussed. The term 'non-conformist' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'dissenters'. The book arose from the author's work as a professional genealogist as he found there was no guide to sources for Protestant Dissenters, so one of the objectives of the book is to provide a list of these sources, which are included in a substantial appendix. The exact geographical coverage is not defined, the preface simply refers to 'in and around Dublin' and there is no map, which would have been helpful. But the area covered is Co. Dublin, not just the city itself, although in the south Bray and Greystones are included, which today are certainly Dublin suburbs but strictly in Co. Wicklow. To the west coverage extends to Lucan and to Howth and Malahide to the north.

The book starts with a general introduction and is then divided into five sections, consisting of chapters devoted to particular groupings of dissenters. The first two sections deal with the largest two groups, the Presbyterians and the Methodists. The following three sections deal with other groupings in chronological order of their establishment in Dublin, the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These include Baptists, Quakers, Moravians, Congregationalists, White Quakers, Kellyites, Walkerites, Christian Brethren, Catholic Apostolic, the Salvation Army and the Christian Scientists. Also included are Huguenots and Lutherans, although as the author points out, strictly they were not dissenters because they put themselves under the authority of the Church of Ireland. Each chapter starts with an introduction

to that particular grouping and then the history of each congregation is dealt with in alphabetical order. The amount of detail given for each congregation varies according to their longevity, notability and availability of surviving records. For the Lutherans considerable biographical details of their ministers are included, who were variously from Germany, Denmark or Norway. Some congregations used a number of different buildings in their lifetime. Sadly there are very few photographs, but nevertheless considerable detail is given about the buildings. Some footnotes give references to where pictures may be found.

The dominance of Presbyterians is of course a complete contrast with the situation in England. In 1900 there were some 18 Presbyterian congregations in Dublin. Some of these congregations were of English origin, coming under the Synod of Munster, and these tended towards Unitarianism in the eighteenth century. The surviving congregation meets in a Gothic-revival style building of 1863 on St. Stephen's Green. The majority were of Scottish origin, coming under the Synod of Ulster. The church of 1843 on Adelaide Road has a classical Palladian façade which is sadly all that remains as the rest of the church was demolished in 2000 and a new building constructed, with accommodation for the church on the ground floor. This church displays the confidence of the Presbyterians in the mid-nineteenth century which is also seen in the grandly Gothic style Abbey Presbyterian Church of 1862 in Rutland Square (now Parnell Square). Much of the finance was provided by Alexander Findlater and the architect was Andrew Heiton of Perth. In addition there were congregations of some of the Scottish secession churches. The single Welsh Calvinistic Methodist (or Presbyterian) Chapel in Talbot Street is listed under the Presbyterians, although arguably should appear under Methodists. Many of the congregation were sailors for whom spittoons were provided. This congregation, served by ministers travelling from Wales each week, lasted until 1939. The building was subsequently used for a time by a group of Baptists but later fell into commercial use, still surviving in 2009, presumably minus the spittoons.

In terms of congregations, the Methodists exceeded to Presbyterians with some 26 congregations in 1900. The largest Methodist grouping was the Wesleyans, although the New Connexion and the Primitive Methodists also had congregations here. But it was not until 1817 that Wesleyans in Ireland split from the established church, leading to the peculiarly Irish connexion of Primitive Wesleyans who refused to disassociate from the established Church. They merged back with the Wesleyans after the Church of Ireland itself was disestablished in 1871. The early Wesleyans met at a variety of places, the chapel still in use in Lower Abbey Street being constructed in 1820-21, with gallery and capable of accommodating 1500 persons. This was demolished in 1901 and a new building constructed on the same site. One of the buildings used by the Primitive Wesleyans was that in Langrishe Place built in 1826. This ceased to be

used in 1880 or 1881 following the merger with the Wesleyans but still survived in 2009 in commercial use.

Quakers and Baptists arrived in the seventeenth century, the latter in particular associated with the Cromwellian Army. Currently there seems to be no congregation of Baptists in the centre of Dublin. The chapel of 1839 in Lower Abbey Street closed in 1888 when the congregation decided to move to a new building in Harcourt Street, which was considered to be a more convenient location for the majority of the congregation. But this closed in 1942 when they moved to Grosvenor Hall in Rathgar, which had previously been used by Open Brethren, although this Gothic style building had originally built for Baptist use in the 1850s. This congregation still exists. The Harcourt Street building survived until the 1970s but has now been swallowed up by the Garda headquarters.

Dublin is of course the centre of Irish Quakerism, meetings throughout the island coming under the authority of Dublin, and not London, Yearly Meeting. Since 1691 they had been located in Eustace Street, but these premises were sold in 1987, except for a small part which continues to be used for Meeting for Worship. Yearly Meeting offices were moved initially to Swanbrook House, which formed part of the Quaker-owned Bloomfield Hospital in Donnybrook, and then in 2005 to new premises in Rathfarnham. The Eustace Street premises have become the Irish Film Centre.

Moravians were quite prominent in Ulster, but the Dublin community was never large. Formed largely through the work of John Cennick, the hymn writer, they originally used a building in Skinners Alley that had been built for a General Baptist congregation. Subsequently they had to move out following a rather public dispute with John Wesley over the use of this building. Although some of the Dublin congregations of the Cromwellian era may have inclined towards independency, the Congregationalists are listed here under the eighteenth century and a Countess of Huntingdon congregation appears under this category.

White Quakers, Kellyites and Walkerities were peculiarly Irish groups, although Thomas Kelly is widely known as a hymn writer. The Christian Brethren, otherwise known as Plymouth Brethren, were however to achieve worldwide reach, in both Open and Exclusive forms. The fact that this book lists their first meeting place in 1830 in Aungier Street attests to the comprehensiveness of its coverage of Nonconformist meeting places. As always their buildings are generally simple, lacking in any architectural pretension, except where they had taken over an existing building like the Baptist chapel in Rathgar.

The Catholic Apostolic Church of 1863 by E.T. Owen in Adelaide Road is considered to be rather humble compared with the ostentatious buildings they constructed elsewhere. For a short time in the 1930s it was used by the Church of Ireland for Irish language services but since 1960 has been leased for use by the Dublin Lutheran congregation. The sanctuary is said still to contain the wooden seats reserved for used by the apostles, prophets, evangelists and ministers. This

Lutheran congregation originated in the 1930s and is not successor to the earlier congregation meeting in Great Marlborough Street (now Poolbeg Street) which existed from around 1698 to 1844.

Dissenters were never a large part of the Dublin population, perhaps reaching their high point in 1861 when they comprised around 4.5% of the population. Thus they have never had the significance in Dublin as elsewhere even in Ireland, explaining why they have often been overlooked. This book succeeds in its objective of making clearer their contribution to the history of Dublin, although a location map and more photographs would have been helpful.

Roger Holden

The Origins of Primitive Methodism by Sandy Calder. Studies in Modern British Religious History. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016. 293 pages, hardback. £75.00. ISBN 978-1-78327-081-1.

All historians know that Primitive Methodism was the nineteenth-century denomination distinctive for its poor, working-class membership, its simple and cheaply built chapels, and its particular significance for the development of the English working class, its consciousness and its organisations, such as trades unions. Or do they? Sandy Calder's study questions all these assumptions and challenges us to look at them afresh through a rigorously sceptical examination of original evidence, using both familiar sources re-examined and additional sources newly brought to bear (in several cases following their increased accessibility online). The book's utilitarian title, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, does not convey the breadth and depth of its scope, ranging as it does across a chronological span of some 150 years from the emergence of Primitive Methodism (PM) to any surviving identity retained post-Methodist reunification in 1932. Calder's approach insists on getting the social and denominational context right, leading to discussion of some big related themes, amongst them the attitude of the State to Methodism in the Napoleonic period and the secularisation thesis. Evidence is from England, with an emphasis on the original heartlands of PM in the Potteries, but many sources are explored on a wider scale. For example, the 1851 religious census returns are re-considered at county level for the whole of England, and chapel buildings are discussed using Calder's dataset of some 2,600 chapels built between 1811 and 1914 by PMs (1,150), Wesleyans (1,050) and Congregationalists (400). In each case date of build, original appearance and original denomination can be ascertained. Amidst an impressive array of sources particular discussion is concentrated on baptismal records including information on father's occupation; the 1851 religious census; chapel buildings; trustee records; local and regional

newspapers; and wills of known PMs. Anyone interested in using these major sources in their own research will benefit from Calder's method and findings.

Beyond this, one of the most striking features of the book is the consistent and sustained way in which the evidence is brought together, across ten chapters and using a mix of quantitative and qualitative analysis, all deployed to meet a clear research agenda. This is based on Calder's belief that 'all history is provisional' and that 'sources can never be complete, unbiased, and free from hindsight. The historian's job is to see beyond that, and to re-imagine that past in its own terms, not ours.' This is what Calder, in a clearly postmodernist style, sets out to do. In an interesting preface he describes how he personally comes to the subject, having seen in his Central Scotland upbringing the reality of working-class coping mechanisms with their pretended indifference, self-mockery and wordless rebelliousness, expressed in unsubtle peer pressure and dumb insolence. This leads him to reflect (p.xiii), 'I wonder how much of the 50% absenteeism discovered by Horace Mann in the returns of the 1851 Religious Census was the product of dumb insolence, rather than any claimed immaturity or secularising spririt'. Calder also assesses the assumptions of others about religion and class and the discourses which have been generated. In a thorough and useful review of both contemporary accounts and subsequent connexional histories of PM and of the work since the 1960s of modern social historians, Calder finds in both bad cases of shoe-horning the past to fit present sensibilities. First this was true of the heroic narrative of its origins developed within PM and then sustained through subsequent phases of PM development. This was a self-image of shared hardship and belief in taking faith and hope of salvation to a suffering poor in the face of the increasing gentrification of other churches with whom PM was in successful competition. Second, Calder finds that this narrative was then too uncritically adopted by modern social historians, who looked for social phenomena played out in nineteenth-century religion and saw PM as an expression of shared class identities, linked also to secular activism and chosen in opposition to the increasingly genteel compromises of the Wesleyans and other churches.

Calder's agenda is to return to the evidence and let it speak for itself, alert to three kinds of selectivity: whether events were recalled; how they were described; and how they were explained. He aims to include non-Connexional sources where possible. His conclusions (in briefest summary) are that the appeal of PM in the early nineteenth century was to 'high end', more skilled working-class people, with some support on occasion from the more prosperous, including farmers and employers. It was not a religion predominantly of the poor and dispossessed and was, as early as the late 1820s, reported in local newspapers not as a source of danger and subversion but as part of a range of churches and chapels, its preachers given the title 'Reverend'. Calder argues that PM's character and appeal was primarily religious, resting on a belief in ruin, repentance and redemption, and an understanding that this life is probationary for the next. Its

adherents were equal – in their shared values of seeking salvation for themselves and others – but this did not translate into an outward looking culture of political, class-based activism. Indeed the reality was rather the reverse, with adherents separated by their values from the mass of their working-class contemporaries. Nor did PM appeal because others, notably Wesleyans, were failing. Evangelical Protestantism was growing as a whole in the early nineteenth century, and (as Calder states in a typically pithy point) in 'two decades [following the emergence of PM] the apparently toadying Wesleyan Methodists recruited at double the rate of the populist P[rimitive] M[ethodist] C[onnexion] (p.11).

Calder goes on to follow PM through its subsequent development, relating his revised view of the early movement to a sequence of following phases. Like other social historians of religion and chapels, the present reviewer was brought up on a familiar chronology of nineteenth-century Nonconformity; first a period of heroic expansion to *c.*1840; followed by mid-century consolidation, of legal and social status and denominational organisation, *c.*1840-60; and then maturity of status but challenges to mission and numbers, 1860-1914. For PM Calder sees a distinctive variant, in which the 'heroic hardship discourse' regarding its origins had a central role. From *c.*1850 PM was certainly moving on to a phase

The PM chapel – plain, cheap and unpretentious? North Moreton, Oxfordshire (photograph copyright Kate Tiller).

of maturity after initial growth, developing denominational structures but in its case suffering a slowdown and the threat of falling numbers. As Calder puts it, 'this was a movement where prudential values and stern faith did not chime with the mass of the people of any class' (p.268) nor enable it to compete readily with other denominations. But PM did not want to compromise and predominant opinion in the movement continued the discourse of shared heroic hardship in a church of the humble and poor so strongly developed in its first four decades. The consequences of this were that in the mid-century PM in fact became more a church of the poorer working class, as skilled workers and middle class adherents moved away from its stern faith and found its intense and emotional worship increasingly uncomfortable. In Calder's view, 'trapped within a discourse of heroic adversity, they presided over a connexion that progressively came to fit the image of a church of the social margins' (p.256). Only as late as the 1890s did PM finally acknowledge that change was necessary. By this time attempts at outreach and urban mission and to cope with PM's unviable chapel 'estate' were too late. In a changing climate the road to eventual reunification with the Wesleyans was inevitable. PM 'was a church for its time and its time had passed'.

The PM chapel building plays a major part in Calder's evidence and discussion. He argues that, to date, it has tended to be incorporated into the dominant discourse; small and plain, cheap and unpretentious, a manifestation of a cash-strapped church of the poor and evidence for the struggles of heroic hardship. Again we are taken back to original evidence, in particular to investigate the cost and financing of chapel building, and then the design evolution of the PM chapel with its distinctive anti-Gothicism. Calder has compiled two databases, one of chapels where costs are documented covers over 460 cases built between 1801 and 1900. The sample comes from 20 historic counties, 75% from north of Birmingham, and only 8% from London and the Home Counties. The second database, already described, is national including some 2,600 chapels, and taking a comparative approach – PM, Wesleyan and Congregationalist. Findings, based on calculations of cost per seat, show some increase in costs peaking around 1880, but not a smooth trend. Loans, legacies, gifts and mortgages, some involving hard-headed terms from prosperous adherents, were used as well as income and fundraising from local congregations. Calder suggests choices were not simply cost driven, with for example more expensive 'Classical' style buildings widely preferred to cheaper 'Gothic' structures. The work of mission continued to be a priority in this more than other Nonconformist churches, a non-social or economic priority for sticking to simple and plain structures. Outwardly assertive, large PM chapels were associated chiefly with the movement's final phase, often in towns. They have survived proportionately less well amongst PM's surviving 'estate'. Chapel style and design are seen as an important indicator of PM's persistently distinctive character. They are assessed using the database of *c.*2,600 chapels and against familiar models of chapel

The more exotic PM chapel – Stanford in the Vale, Oxfordshire (photograph by Nick Macneill and reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Licence).

development: vernacular-Classical-Gothic; and inward looking-public-sacred and assertive. Findings include that Congregationalists chose Gothic for 74% of their post-1850 builds; Wesleyans for 61%; and PMs for only 33%. Where Gothic was espoused by PMs it was late, largely in the 1900s. Overall Calder points to PM chapel buildings as the product not of poverty or unsophisticated aesthetic sense but 'of collective, if informal and uncoordinated intention' in a movement without strong central control. It was the religious motivations not the social aspirations of PMs that drove their architecture. The emphasis on preaching persisted. Moreover the PM pattern of missioning, multiplying the word from one location to others nearby and generating further small congregations, made for a culture of multiple small, local chapels or meeting places.

A strength of Calder's method is not to treat each chapel's history as an isolated entity but to understand it in wider context. He therefore measures 'propinquity'

with other PM chapels. This is an approach that should be more widely adopted, and extended to assessing a chapel in relation to other places of worship in its locality; its own physical location in the settlement pattern; and possibly as part of a wider built presence — school, meeting room, chapel house, minister's home. Calder concentrates on the PM chapels, with a detailed stylistic analysis which points to a persistently non-Gothic style, highly unusual amongst English Nonconformists but consistent with the theological, liturgical and religiously-detemined nature of the movement which he argues throughout the book was present from its origins. (He does, however, allow an intriguing possibility of a 'secret sacredness' in the recurrent use of groupings of three, windows and doors, in PM chapel design. Are they a possible reference to the Trinity?).

It is impossible in a condensed review to do full justice to the detail, nuance and sophistication of Calder's arguments. It should be clear though that this is an important, challenging but rewarding book and one to be warmly recommended. It needs to be made more accessible than a £75 price tag allows. Its language, of discourse and re-imagining, may sometimes seem alien, but is clearly explained. There are tensions between pushing generalisations from large datasets whilst acknowledging the variability of local experience. The inconsistent use of italics and bold in footnotes is sometimes distracting in a generally rigorously presented book. There have been a number of texts and studies of 1851 religious census returns published since 2005, when Calder's citations stop. Such points are far outweighed by the positive reasons for anyone interested in PM history, in the history of Nonconformity generally and in chapels to engage with Calder's reinterpretations and learn from his methods of discovering and using evidence.

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