THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

Newsletter 64 January 2017

The rostrum, choir pews and organ of Bishop Street Methodist Church, Leicester (photograph copyright John Dearing)

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NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

1 April 2017	West Yorkshire Communities (Chris Skidmore)	
early July 2017*	Oxford visit (Martin Wellings) and AGM	
30 September 2017	Conference (jointly with the Ecclesiological Society) on the architecture of less-well-studied denominations at the St Alban centre, London.	
Autumn 2017*	Bristol visit	**dates to be arranged*

EDITORIAL

Your editor is proud to present this packed issue of the *Newsletter* and would like to thank all his correspondents for their contributions and to apologise to those for whom there was no space in this issue. He continues to welcome further contributions.

2017 may turn out to be a good year for the recording of our heritage of chapels and meeting houses. We welcome the engagement of Historic England in this task in its program of 'Taking Stock' which has so far surveyed Roman Catholic churches (www.taking-stock.org.uk/Home) and Quaker Meeting Houses (see article in *Newsletter* 62). We look forward to the publication of Christopher Wakeling's book *The Chapel in England* by Historic England early in the year. The final volume of David Butler's survey of meeting houses – *Quaker Buildings Abroad* – is also currently in proof.

Despite this, as this *Newsletter* shows, there are still many Nonconformist buildings neglected and in limbo, but I believe there may still be grounds for optimism.

PROCEEDINGS

VISIT TO LEICESTER – 8 OCTOBER 2016

On an overcast but mild and largely dry October 8th, around 27 chapellers assembled at the Bishop Street Methodist Church for a tour of Leicester's chapels, led by Paul Griffiths with Neil Crutchley and David Rhodes as assistant shepherds. At the outset we were reminded that while Leicester today is perhaps best known for its football and rugby teams and its connection with Richard III, in 1850 it was nicknamed the 'Metropolis of Dissent'. This claim is certainly borne out by the imposing redbrick façade of the Bishop Street Church. Although at present at the heart of Leicester's Town Hall Square, when built in 1815-16 on land close to the cattle market, it lay on the edge of Leicester outside the city walls. The town hall itself came along 60 years later.

The imposing redbrick façade of the Bishop Street Methodist Church (photograph copyright John Dearing)

The chapel was designed by William Jenkins, a Methodist minister who was architect for a number of chapels across the land including the contemporaneous Walcot Chapel, Bath. Internally, its features include a horseshoe-shaped gallery and a mid-Victorian organ that was once thought to have been the work of 'Father Smith'. While the traditional layout including fixed pews and 'High Victorian' rostrum have been retained there has also been sensitive adaptation to contemporary needs with the conversion of the foyer area to a café, open six days a week, whose excellent fare a number of the party sampled when they returned to the chapel for lunch.

The second port-of-call on the other side of the city centre was the Great Meeting Unitarian chapel, dating from 1708. Here the minister, Dr Arthur Stewart, outlined the history and features of the chapel, which began as a joint

enterprise of Independent and Presbyterian congregations, both of which had their origins in the ejections of 1662. The Congregationalists went their own way in 1803, leaving the Presbyterians to espouse the Unitarian cause.

In terms of architecture the chapel comprises a nearly square building with hipped roof surrounding a central valley used for water drainage. Porches were added in 1866 and in recent years the building has been further extended with the addition of a Garden Room in contemporary style.

The interior of the Great Meeting
(photograph copyright John Dearing)

A notable choirmaster in the early 19th century was William Gardiner, who championed the music of Beethoven and gave us the hymn tune 'Belmont' (By cool Siloam's shady rill). The chapel also produced the first seven Mayors of the city, following the local government reformation of 1835, earning thereby the title of the 'The Mayors' Nest'. Other members pioneered the provision of welfare and education for poorer families and others were involved in the development of the hosiery trade. The continuing influence of the Unitarian faith in the city was demonstrated by the 2011 election of Sir Peter Soulsby, a member, as the first elected Mayor of Leicester.

The Central Baptist Church in Charles Street, our last call before the lunch break, is the surviving member of a complex family of Baptist chapels in the centre of Leicester. It began life in 1831 as an offshoot from a Particular Baptist Church meeting in Harvey Lane and subsequently absorbed the congregations meeting in Belvoir Street in 1940 and Victoria Road in 1983. It was designed by William Flint with a fine classical façade and interior with galleries supported on slender columns. However, the central High Pulpit was removed in 1980. Of particular interest to students of missiology is the museum containing papers and artefacts relating to the work of William Carey, who was pastor at Harvey Lane from 1789

and four years later became the Baptist Missionary Society's pioneer missionary to India. Another notable pastor was Robert Hall (1806-26) whose statue can be seen in New Walk. Roger Beeby who outlined the history of the chapel also gave the impression of a lively and active church with current activities including 'messy church', Café Church and Unplugged (held at Costa Coffee).

Joseph Hansom's Belvoir Street Chapel – the 'Pork Pie Chapel'
(photograph copyright John Dearing)

After lunch the party visited one of the former Baptist Churches that fed into Central. Belvoir Street was built in 1845 to replace the Harvey Lane Chapel with room for 1,500 worshippers. Neil Crutchley, author of a booklet on the subject, presented its history. Unusually, the chapel was designed by a prominent Roman Catholic architect, Joseph Hansom, inventor of the Hansom Cab. It is believed to be his only Nonconformist church design and one of very few in the classical style. Its outward appearance as a circular tub with a lid earned it the nickname of the 'Pork Pie Chapel'. Belvoir Street flourished under the lengthy pastorates of James Mursell and James Thew; including Mursell's time at Harvey Lane these men chalked up 85 years between them. However, the early part of the 20th century saw a decline in numbers attending and increased maintenance costs leading to the closure of the chapel in 1940. It was subsequently sold to the city corporation and adapted for use as a College of Adult Education. Happily we heard that recently the auditorium has again been used for Sunday worship by a charismatic group.

The final two chapels were a good bus trip away from the city centre in the leafy southern suburbs of Clarendon Park and Stoneygate, passing en route the former Victoria Road Baptist Church, now used by Seventh-Day Adventists. Clarendon Park Congregational Church was opened in 1886 and its first minister from 1888-94 was the major Scottish theologian, P.T. Forsyth. In contrast to the predominantly classical architecture found in the city centre churches the style here is late Gothic Revival in what has been described as 'a free arts-

and-crafts manner'. Its most striking feature is the massive tower with triple Perpendicular windows facing onto the London Road. The architect was a local man, James Tait.

Clarendon Park remained outside the United Reformed Church in 1971 and subsequently became a leading member of the Congregational Federation. More recently a proposed merger with Stoneygate Baptist did not achieve sufficient support to proceed, although relations between the two churches are close. The church hall is also used for Saturday worship by a group of Messianic Jews.

A walk further down London Road brought us to our final destination, the Stoneygate Baptist Church, also the most recent of the chapels visited, dating from 1900 when 70 members withdrew from Clarendon Hall Baptist (now a Sikh Temple). Initially, the congregation met in rented rooms but in 1913/14

The interior of Stoneygate Baptist Church
(photograph copyright John Dearing)

they were able to occupy a new church built and financed by a group of local businessmen. The architect, G. Lawton Brown, chose a Baroque style with a monumental façade fronting a spacious barrel-vaulted interior. The Baptistery is equally vast, taking 24 hours to fill!

Unusually perhaps the customary chapel tea took place in the chapel itself rather than ancillary buildings. Suffice it to say that this repast was very much in the Chapels Society tradition and during this it fell to Chris Skidmore, in the absence of our Chairman, to formally thank our hosts and all those who had contributed to such an excellent and varied 'chapel crawl'.

John Dearing

CONFERENCE HOSTED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF DENOMINATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AND COGNATE LIBRARIES TOGETHER WITH THE CHAPELS SOCIETY – 16 & 17 SEPTEMBER 2017

Nonconformist attitudes to war and peace in the long twentieth century

The ten speakers covered a wide variety of topics over the two days, but some unifying themes did emerge from the different denominations represented and each paper enhanced the overall subject whether by adding examples or by contrast.

One of the obvious factors that came across many times was that the world in the first half of the twentieth century was a religious world. The political arguments were sanctified by the church in many cases and carried weight, so it was even more remarkable that some individuals were prepared to protest against the war, even disagreeing with their minister and family. One such was George Herbert Ellis, whose story was brought to life by his grandson, John Ellis, ex-Moderator of the United Reformed Church. When George Ellis was conscripted and refused to fight, he was called before a tribunal in Exeter Guildhall on March 11th 1916. It seems the discussion centred on why he sold toys of a military nature in his family's toyshop!

Professor Peter Ackers used a family memory of pacifism in the First World War to illustrate a denomination's view of the war. In his case the denomination was the Churches of Christ in Wigan and the witnesses were his own grandparents and great grandparents. He demonstrated that the Churches of Christ believed that the Bible said Christians ought not to fight and yet this was challenged increasingly as the First World War progressed, and brought divisions between the older and younger generations. One of the younger generation was Robert Price of Platt Bridge Churches of Christ chapel who suffered greatly for his refusal to fight, spending most of the war in one form of confinement or another. It was thought that most of the young people in that chapel sympathised with the stand he took, even though he was one of a small minority in the denomination overall. Some in the denomination sought to remove Price from the recognised preachers list, showing what they thought about him!

The arguments for or against conscientious objection were also played out among the students of the Mansfield Road colleges in Oxford, some of whom were training for ministry in the Congregational or Unitarian churches. David Seymour gave us the results of his research into the attitudes of the various students. Some felt that they had to fight, although they had not come to that conclusion without an inner battle. The view of the principal of Mansfield College, W.B. Selbie was that no other course was open except to fight. However, some felt they could not fight. Ninety-four Mansfield men undertook national service, which

was approximately one-third of those who were full members of the college. Of those 37% worked for the YMCA, 10% for the Friends' Ambulance Unit, 20% served as Chaplains and 29% served in the armed forces. Two individuals worked for the Friends' Relief expeditions in France and Serbia. In 1916 eight of Mansfield's wartime students applied to the Oxford Tribunal for, and gained, exemption from military service. Four other students secured exemption from Tribunals elsewhere. In 1917 one was imprisoned for refusal to serve.

The Society of Friends is famous for its pacifist stance, but David Boulton pointed out that this was not clearcut even for Quakers at the beginning of the First World War. In 1914, 45% of the letters to *The Friend*, the denominational magazine, were favourable or sympathetic to Friends who had gone to fight. Some Friends felt able to serve in the Friends Ambulance Unit, but because it was under army command many felt that they could not serve in its ranks. In 1916 conscription brought Quakers closer together, because they all agreed that fighting could not be compelled. Many went before Tribunals and were not exempted from conscription, resulting in their being imprisoned for the duration of the war. The last Quaker prisoner was not released until August 1919!

Chaplaincy was the subject of the Revd Dr Neil Allison's lecture and in particular a lively Australian Baptist chaplain, Ernest Lodge Watson. He had volunteered in 1914 to become the first Baptist chaplain. He was a tall man with a massive frame and was good at singing and telling stories. His services, which took the form of revivalist meetings, were organised apart from the compulsory church parades and were very popular. In the early days of the war there is some evidence of many soldiers being much affected by the message of such evangelists. Men would choose to sing Sankey's hymns as they marched. Professor D. Densil Morgan also spoke about Welsh Nonconformist chaplains who served the Welsh regiments at the front, whose men needed something closer to their chapel going at home than the organised church parades. The letters written home by Welsh soldiers demonstrated faith was still very much part of their lives, even though they were experiencing the horrors of war.

Judith James was also able to use soldiers' letters home to illustrate their experiences of the First World War, as these were often published in the Strict Baptist denominational magazines. The attitude to war in the denomination was not in any way critical, most of the pastors believing that it was a necessary evil. They were concerned about the attitudes that implied that soldiers who died were automatically in heaven and about phrases such as 'supreme sacrifice'.

There is something very biblical about memorials and the making of lists of warriors and it was fitting that two of our speakers should show how Nonconformist churches and others wanted to pay tribute to the 'fallen'. Dr Anne Brook showed how the lists started as rolls of honour – an expression of pride in the lads of the chapel and often the Sunday Schools who had volunteered. They then became vital working documents for Sunday School teachers, many of

whom were women, to send parcels, to offer intercessory prayers and to comfort the bereaved families. The lists formed the basis of welcome home events and of the permanent memorials. Professor Clyde Binfield gave an illustrated lecture of the work of Lutyens in the memorials in France and the Cenotaph in Whitehall and then showed how Lutyens' classicism had influenced the building of memorials in the Nonconformist boarding schools round the country.

By way of contrast Dr Andrew Chandler discussed the attitude to Nazism of the German congregations in England in the Second World War. In the period leading up to the war London had eight German speaking congregations, the largest being St. George's with a congregation of two to three thousand. There were other German churches in Liverpool, Batley, Manchester and Bradford. As early as 1933 Pastor Julius Rieger of St. George's was clear about the dangers of Nazism and as the refugee crisis grew he set up a centre for Jewish refugees. Many German pastors in England spoke out publicly against the evils of Nazism and joined the Confessing church. They were financially independent which made it easier for them to protest. They were supported by likeminded clergy in England like George Bell and Principal Selbie of Mansfield College. In internment in England the German congregations worked ecumenically and creatively setting up the British/German fellowship in 1941.

In this brief summary of the two most enjoyable days of lectures I have only been able to dip in and give a flavour of the wealth of material that the speakers shared with the participants. It is hoped in due course that the unpublished lectures may be available in print.

Pauline Johns

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Paul Gardner writes:

It is with sadness that we report the death of the following member:

Ian S. Pettman, London SE11

We have pleasure in welcoming the following new personal member to the Society:

Owen Roberts, Levenshulme, Manchester

Can I ask that you get in touch with me if you have moved house or any of your contact details have changed.

I would like to point out that my second term as Membership Secretary will end at the end of 2017. If any member would be interested in taking on this vital role and would like an informal discussion regarding my duties, please contact me (see page 2 for details).

Many thanks.

SHORT ARTICLES

ARCHITECTS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

Over the last few years, I have been researching architects with a close connection to the Presbyterian Church of England (PCoE), who with the odd exception, only designed church premises for the denomination, and I have put together a dossier (scrapbook) of their careers and churches. I have thought it might be of interest to some of you to share what I have learned through this exercise.

There are seven architects in all, all either Scottish or Irish: Thomas Arnold (1838-1912); Henry Greig Badenoch (1847-1916) and his partner James Bruce (1857-1918);Thomas Phillips Figgis (1858-1948); George Lethbridge (1847-1924); William Wallace (pre-1870 – post-1909); and John Campbell Turner Murray (1867-1933). The dossier also includes a list of other architects who designed one or more PCoE buildings but were not so exclusively associated. The architects named above were all active in the thirty years prior to the First World War – what might be called 'The Great Urban Chapel Building Age' – although PCoE buildings were nearly all called churches.

During this period, larger commissions were often put up for competition between some six architects, who would produce sketches of the exterior and sometimes the interior plus an estimate of the cost of erecting the edifice they proposed. This could lead to law suits, on grounds of collusion or plagiarism I would imagine, and later on, architects would put in their bids using pseudonyms such as *Trinity* or *Grace* so that the Church would not know who was who, but since the bidders were usually the same group and their proposals were assessed by architects not taking part but well known to each other, I doubt that anyone was fooled for long. At the time even large buildings were completed within two years. It would probably take a decade to build them today. The architects above do not seemed to have been much involved, if at all, in this procedure, but one cannot be sure, as more often than not only the name of the architect who got the job is recorded in in archives. Sometimes plans were obtained by the builder or an individual benefactor, and the architect, if there was one, may or may not be recorded. In the case of one well known church with extensive detailed archives, the architect's fee is known but not his name.

Finding out who the architects were has become much easier with IT advances and the Internet. The dictionaries of Scottish and Irish Architects are a wealth of information, but it is not so easy with England and Wales unless they are very well known. Often one can e-mail the area archives and get a rapid reply and image of the church etc. and Helen Weller, the Archivist at Westminster College has been very helpful in this way as most of PCoE local church's documents are of course located there. She also has the year books to hand and unlike those of

most other denominations they usually give the date when the church was built. Occasionally, if one goes to the individual church's website, even if the building has been long since demolished, it may reveal the name or an image in a history section, although one has to be careful with those put on more recently as they tend to be compiled by people who have made assumptions.

Walking into local authority archives can be productive. They vary according to how many staff they have and how much they have got onto the computers that is easily accessible, but I will say that most of the archivists I have met have been really keen to help and obviously enjoy their work. While there, look at old newspapers that usually have accounts of stone-laying and opening services and also their collection of street photographs. The Royal Institute of British Architects Library has old copies of *The Builder* and similar publications which take a time to trawl through but are a valuable resource of the information one needs. Google Earth will show you a building if still extant and sites like Britain from Above (www.britainfromabove.org.uk) may give you an idea of what a church demolished half-a-century or more ago looked like.

I am not intending to publish, but if any of you would like to look at what I have put together, Helen Weller has a copy of the dossier. My e-mail is cdbuck@btinternet.com.

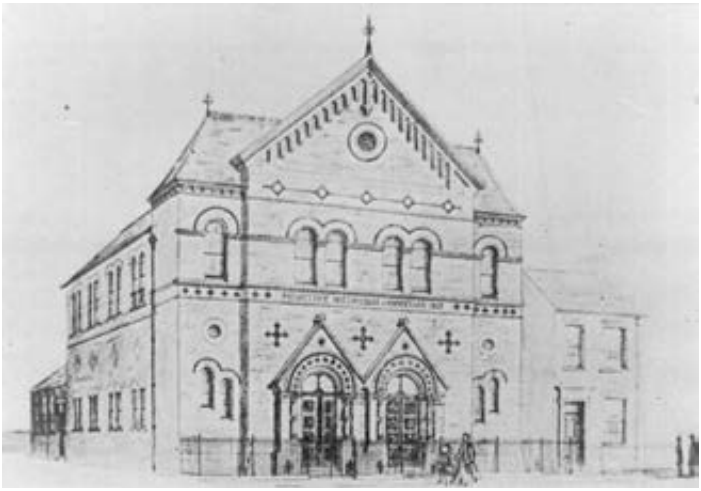
Christopher Buckwell

A TALE OF TWO CHAPELS:
One being saved and the other still in purgatory

Barton-upon-Humber is fortunate in possessing an outstanding group of places of worship, ranging from the Saxon and later medieval St. Peter's Church (an English Heritage historic property open to the public), the medieval parish church of St. Mary, and a series of contrasting, and unusually intact, 19th century Nonconformist chapels. This article relates to two chapels which form important links in this chain.

The Primitive Methodist Chapel in Queen Street is the successor to two others (one of which, from the 1830s, survives as an 1860s house conversion). Designed by Joseph Wright of Hull, a pupil of Cuthbert Brodrick, it opened in 1867. Wright, a Primitive Methodist, was the 'Prims' principal architect in this area of the country, designing some 35 chapels. Most have now been demolished and the Barton chapel is considered to be one of the best surviving examples of his work.

Following closure by the Methodists on Easter Day 1961, the chapel was sold to the Salvation Army. They carried out alterations – inserting a floor at gallery level, converting the ground floor into a number of rooms and erecting steps up to the front doors; the newly-formed first floor retained the majority of its original features and became the main worship area.



The Primitive Methodist Chapel in Queen Street

However, a few years ago the Salvation Army put the building up for sale, and the preservation trust which runs the successful Wilderspin National School Museum next door has bought the premises and has extended its activities into the chapel – now called The Joseph Wright Hall in honour of its architect. The Trust has begun to carry out a comprehensive repair and rehabilitation scheme, with the intention of creating a place for performing and other arts. The work includes renovation of the first floor, with new replica Victorian pews to replace some sections lost in the 1960s – a rare example of traditional-style re-pewing!

Sadly, the news is not so good for the former **United Reformed Church**. This building, Providence Chapel (page 13), was erected in 1806 by the local Independent congregation (later becoming Congregational). It ceased to be used by the URC in March 1991 and the Chapel, adjoining manse, Sunday-schoolroom and graveyard were offered for sale. A drastic 'gut and stuff' development proposal (to create five dwellings in the Chapel and four in the schoolroom, split the manse into two dwellings and build a house in the garden) went to a Public Inquiry in June 1993, following which the application was refused.

Early in 1995 a family bought the entire premises for £20,500. The schoolroom was sold and converted into a house and the manse renovated but, apart from a brief use by St. Aidan's Mission (Free Church of England) about 1997, the Chapel has been neglected.

Two years ago the manse, (with its garden – incorporating the graveyard) and adjoining Chapel were put up for sale for £245,000. Recently an offer to purchase has been accepted. It is understood that the prospective purchaser intends to convert the Chapel for residential use – involving removal of original internal fittings.

The Providence Chapel

Providence Chapel is currently listed Grade II, and its fine original 1806 galleried interior remains largely intact (it is illustrated in Christopher Stell's *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in Eastern England*, English Heritage 2002, Lincolnshire entry no. 21, p.197). A detailed comparative exercise by Keith Miller in 1993, recently updated, has highlighted Providence Chapel's rarity and significance. Since the listing of Barton upon Humber in the 1970s, and the 1993 Public Inquiry, Nonconformist chapels in the region have undergone significant losses and alterations, as they have across the country as a whole. Providence Chapel is now the oldest surviving Nonconformist chapel in a wide area north and south of the Humber which still possesses its intact and unspoilt original galleried interior. It is the earliest surviving Congregational chapel in Lincolnshire with original fittings intact. In fact it now appears to be the earliest Nonconformist chapel in the county with original fittings intact (apart from the Quaker Meeting Houses at Brant Broughton and Lincoln which of course have very different furnishings).

Barton-upon-Humber Civic Society has now submitted to Historic England an application for up-grading the Chapel. The good survival and legibility of this Georgian chapel group give it special significance, and we feel that the Chapel in particular merits upgrading to II* in recognition of its outstanding importance. It is essential that this recognition of the Chapel's high heritage significance comes now, in order to assist and enhance its protection and conservation at a time when it is under threat of unsympathetic alteration.

The Civic Society would very much welcome readers' support for the campaign to conserve the chapel. Please contact the author at f.john.french@gmail.com.

John French

THE ORGAN OF ABBEY LANE URC, SAFFRON WALDEN

The organ at Abbey Lane URC, Saffron Walden, has recently been awarded a Grade II Historic Organ Certificate by the British Institute of Organ Studies.

Built in 1858 by W. M. Hedgeland of 38 Upper Gower Street, Bedford Square, London, he then extended the organ in 1866. Further modifications were carried out by Alfred Kirkland in 1899. Following this, few, if any, changes were made except the addition of an electric blower in the 1930s.

In 1858 the Trustees and Subscribers of Abbey Lane chapel decided that 'an Organ would be very desirable to be erected in the Gallery, where the Singing pew now is, costing 160 pounds as per plans submitted to the meeting by Mr William Hedgeland Organ Builder of London.' Unfortunately the Minutes Book gives no indication as to why this decision was made. We know, however, that during the 1840s and 50s the capacity of the chapel had to be increased with extra pews and even additional galleries, so maybe the singers in the Singing Pew were struggling to control the singing of a large congregation. Equally it may have been a matter of status; perhaps both were factors.

Commissioning the organ moved fast. Mr Hedgeland proposed a twelve rank instrument with two manuals and pedals to be completed in slightly less than three months. By October 1858 Abbey Lane would have a 12-stop organ sounding much like it does today.

Despite this it wasn't long before the musicians wanted more. In October 1866 it was 'represented by the Organist and choir that some addition was necessary to be made to the organ'. Hedgeland offered his services again and five more ranks of pipes were added at a cost of 129 pounds. While the additions certainly improved the versatility of the organ it's difficult to see how they could really be described as 'necessary' except, perhaps, for the loud and brassy Cornopean reed stop which has provided a worthwhile supplement to 'full organ' ever since.

By the end of the nineteenth century organ design had moved on and, in any case, Hedgeland's instrument was beginning to prove unreliable. Alfred Kirkland, another organ builder operating on a much bigger scale, was called in to carry out a major renovation. He extended the hitherto short swell keyboard, with the extra pipes that entailed, and fitted a concave and radiating pedal-board according to 'RCO rules' (still the UK standard today).

Cost overruns led to a terse exchange of letters between the Church Secretary and Kirkland (delivered to and fro with stunning efficiency by the GPO, almost

the equivalent of modern e-mails). An unauthorised person at Abbey Lane had given Kirkland's men approval for some unanticipated but necessary remedial work. Kirkland's eye was off the ball as he was taking 'a little holiday in Eastbourne' at the time so there was a delay before the additional invoice was submitted. In the end all appears to have been resolved amicably. The unusual and distinctive oak organ stool was an 'extra' costing £1.15s. The total cost of Kirkland's work was £152.15s.

Kirkland left the chapel a robust and practical instrument for the twentieth century although the only new sound was from one additional stop – a Voix Celeste – which is always used in combination with another stop to provide a gentle undulating tremulant – a characteristic late-nineteenth century feature.

All of the pipework, except for the Kirkland additions, is believed to be original Hedgeland with tonal character which has been described as 'looking back' rather than forward. The sound is clear and bright with prompt speech. The rich palette of five 8' ranks on the Great is highly unusual on an organ of this size and there is a wealth of elegant string sound. Stops blend well to provide a wide range of effective combinations.

Today the organ remains much as Kirkland left it. In the 1930s Cedric Arnold added an electric blower so it didn't have to be pumped by hand. Otherwise our twentieth-century forebears have helped greatly by keeping it well maintained but making no further changes.

The National Pipe Organ Register (NPOR) lists around thirty instruments where Hedgeland was involved. However, many of these include extensive work by subsequent builders and others no longer exist – the NPOR includes specifications of organs which were disposed of many years ago. In summary, the organ at Abbey Lane is now one of very few reasonably original Hedgeland instruments and could well be the best documented of any, thanks to the chapel's extensive historical records held at the Essex Records Office.

The NPOR exists to record details of all pipe organs in the British Isles and is maintained by the British Institute of Organ Studies. It provides an invaluable resource for those interested in the organs of this country aided by comprehensive search facilities. However, in practice, there are omissions so if you find an instrument that isn't listed you should try to provide details to the NPOR. Details of how to do this can be found at www.npor.org.uk. Historic Organ Certificates are awarded to instruments of special interest and further details of the criteria for listing may be found on the website of The British Institute of Organ Studies – www.bios.org.uk.

Stephen Rapkin

This article was supplied with a complete pipe list for the organ, omitted for reasons of space, which can be obtained from the author at scrapkin@yahoo.com.sg (Ed.)

COMMUNITIES OF DISSENT

A new research project for family and community historians

Religious dissent, its impact and changing role, is the focus of a new research project for family and community historians.

This is the latest major venture of the Family and Community History Research Society (FACHRS). The society was established in 1998, initially by former Open University students of courses in social, family and community history who wanted to continue their involvement in active research, including shared, major projects done collectively and comparatively by members throughout the country. It has continued independently of the OU with current membership of over 250, of whom on average around 50 take part in major projects. Previous themes have included Swing riots, allotments, and almshouses.

Now attention is turned to the local history of Nonconformity, with Dr Kate Tiller of Oxford University as Project Director. Researchers will begin by assessing the presence of religious dissent in their chosen locality during the heyday of Nonconformity from 1850. In the following period 'Chapel' was a widespread and significant feature of local and national life, often drawing on proud earlier antecedents, but now with enhanced status and scale. To be 'Chapel' was an important source of choice and identity for individuals, families and groups. It touched not only on the spiritual but also the social, educational, political and cultural aspects of people's private and public lives. The presence of Nonconformity gave a distinctive character to many communities.

The Communities of Dissent project will involve participants in two phases of research. **Phase One** (February-September 2017) will produce a profile of local dissent, recording (or recovering a record of) its buildings – chapels, schools, Sunday schools, meeting rooms, institutes, ministers' houses – and making an initial assessment of the Nonconformist culture of which they were part. A range of 'universal' records, including the 1851 religious census; population census; directories; newspapers; standing buildings; large-scale OS and other maps; 1910 Domesday; denominational magazines will provide a shared basis for comparative local profiles of Nonconformity. This profiling will also reveal the extent of surviving evidence for local chapels and lead into **Phase Two** of research (2017-18) involving the in-depth use of chapel records, links to other sources and analysis on topics chosen from a range of possibilities according to researchers' interests and the available source material. Research guides, case studies and a dedicated website will be provided. The FACHRS spring conference at the University of Leicester, 6-7 May 2017, will feature plenary contributions from Kate Tiller and project participants and a project workshop.

Researchers are being recruited fast (see map). Individuals and small groups may take part (provided at least one is a member of FACHRS and acts as contact person with the network). If you are interesting in joining the FACHRS project,

either in the areas shown or other places not yet covered please contact Janet Cumner, the project coordinator, at chapel.project@fachrs.com. She will also be interested to hear from those who may have relevant information on the Communities of Dissent being studied, a map of which will be posted on the FACHRS website.

Kate Tiller

NEWS AND NOTES

There are still Baptists in central Dublin!

Frank Law writes: In *Newsletter 63* Roger Holden wrote an excellent review of the *Dictionary of Dublin Dissent*. In passing he wrote that 'currently there seems to be no congregation of Baptists in the centre of Dublin'. He has overlooked the Grace Fellowship Church which meets at the corner of Pearse Street and Tara Street, beside the Fire Station. Details can be found at www.grace.ie.

Friends of Heptonstall Chapel and Sunday School

There has been concern of late over the state of the famous octagonal Methodist chapel at Heptonstall in West Yorkshire. The chapel and Sunday school buildings

are currently being cared for by a small group of ladies, who are finding the continued upkeep increasingly problematic. The chapel is being renovated with help from the Circuit properties group, but will still need friends in the longer term, and the Sunday School is also an issue due to fire risks etc. It has been decided that a 'Friends' group is the appropriate way forward. A first meeting is to be held in January. If members wish to be kept informed they should contact Amy Binns at ABinns@uclan.ac.uk.

Wesley Historical Society AGM and Lecture
In 2017 this event is to be held at Kingswood School, Bath on Saturday 1 July with an optional visit to the newly reorganised New Room, Bristol on Sunday 2 July. For further details please contact Dr John A. Hargreaves, General Secretary of the Wesley Historical Society, 7 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax. HX1 3AH or e-mail: johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk.

Outdoor baptisteries
Roger Holden has taken me to task for suggesting in the last *News and Notes* that the outdoor baptistery at Monksthorpe Chapel, Lincolnshire, is one of only two surviving outdoor baptisteries in the UK. Roger names two in Wiltshire alone – at Whitbourne Chapel, Corsley near Warminster and Southwick Baptist Chapel, Trowbridge (Grade II listed). He also sends the pictures below of two Welsh examples – Llanwenarth Baptist Chapel, Govilon in Montgomeryshire (left) and at Caersalem Baptist Chapel, Cilgwyn, Pembrokeshire (right). How many more do members know of?

Historic England promotes Nonconformist buildings
Historic England have published their 24-page guide to Nonconformist Places of Worship, written by former Chapels Society President, Christopher Wakeling. It is available free to download from www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-nonconformist-places-of-worship/.

BOOK REVIEW

Mary Green, Bespoke Tailoress: Culture, Craft and Non-Conformity in an Industrial Textile Town of North West England, 1880-1920 by Mary Cunningham. Nottingham: Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum, 2015. 48 pages, pamphlet. £3.99. ISBN 978-1-872044-07-1

This delightful little pamphlet is a small but valuable contribution to a larger historiographical movement in which the accounts of often 'unimportant' people's lives are used as a counterpoint to the grand narratives. Where the particular informs the general, the focus is on the individual in their own small world and this encourages the reader to view the great historical movements through their experience. In so doing, agency is returned to the individual and over-generalized myths can be dispelled.

Mary grew up in Bolton. Her father was an artisan craftsman and due to limited finances he remained a journeyman joiner, but he was determined his children received an education and a trade. Both boys and girls stayed at school until fourteen. They were then all apprenticed. Sadly, her parents were unable to support Mary in her wish to train as a teacher. However, she did become a bespoke tailor. The author reminds us how learning a trade provided both a disciplined approach to life and encouraged initiative, which created an independence of mind and intellectual aspirations. They were a family with a social position to maintain within the complex diversity of working and middle classes to be found in any industrial town. It is always a mistake to lump them all into one 'working class' with one set of experiences.

There is an increasing awareness in how the learning of a craft provided an individual not just with a livelihood, but also with an ability to respond with creativity and flexibility to changing circumstances. Mary is just such an example. She was proud of her craft and this saw her through the loss of her first husband and abandonment by her second – who left her bankrupt – and the death of a child. Not only did her craft save her and her family from destitution, but it also furnished her with an independence of spirit and a sense of dignity that prevented her from relying on handouts. It is clear she never considered herself a victim.

Mary's story also hints at an interesting misunderstanding in the gender divide in crafts; tailors are men and seamstresses women. My spellchecker was adamant on this point – there's no such word as tailoress! Of course today this could never be an issue, the difference between the two crafts is not the gender of the stitcher but how they were trained to approach the construction of clothing and the type of clothing they construct. The generic term for seamstress is now seamster – a return to the sixteenth-century origin of the word – again my

spellchecker objects! This is not nitpicking, because the titles we give ourselves are important. They tell others about how we see ourselves. Immediately we know that Mary Cunningham is proud of her craft and like all skilled trades people she is very precise about the type of skills in which she's trained. In the booklet we are told that right up to her death she insisted on this title. She had worked hard completing her apprenticeship and this sets her apart from others. It was remarkable for a woman to train as a craftsperson.

Her craft 'dignity' married well with her Chapel membership. Although this study is not about a Chapel building, Rose Hill Congregational Chapel looms large in her life. Mary's life was enriched by her commitment to her chapel: she grew up through the chapel, became a Sunday school mistress and preacher. A woman shamed by her husband's desertion found support in her chapel. She led the ladies choir, was pianist for worship and social activities and joined organised outings. One can only imagine what pleasure this offered her (there is a rather moving photograph of a ticket for 'A Meat Tea & Social Evening' in the book). It needs to be remembered too how such chapel activities gave happiness to many. This is not a tale of dour disapproving censorious Christianity but of fellowship and sharing, organised by the chapel members.

This is a very interesting historical project and the author has imaginatively brought together many sources: photos, chapel minutes, oral history accounts from relatives and friends and her precious collection of books annotated by Mary. My one criticism of this book is that it does not make this clear from the outset. The creative use of all these sources is an important example of how the life of a person can be told and valued and of how the telling of one person's life can throw light on the wider social movements by both confirming but also challenging received historical 'facts'.

So what does this reconstruction of one person's life offer us today? With all the talk of the 'Big Society' it reminds us how important it is to have associational institutions, such as chapels, where people can learn and practice organisational skills. Where they can provide their own solutions' to their own problems in a way that is sensitive to the culture and environment in which they live. It also reminds us how important it is for people to have pride in what they do and who they are. This charming little book manages to steer clear of kitsch and is a good example of how to write the important history of the 'ordinary'.

Moira Ackers

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