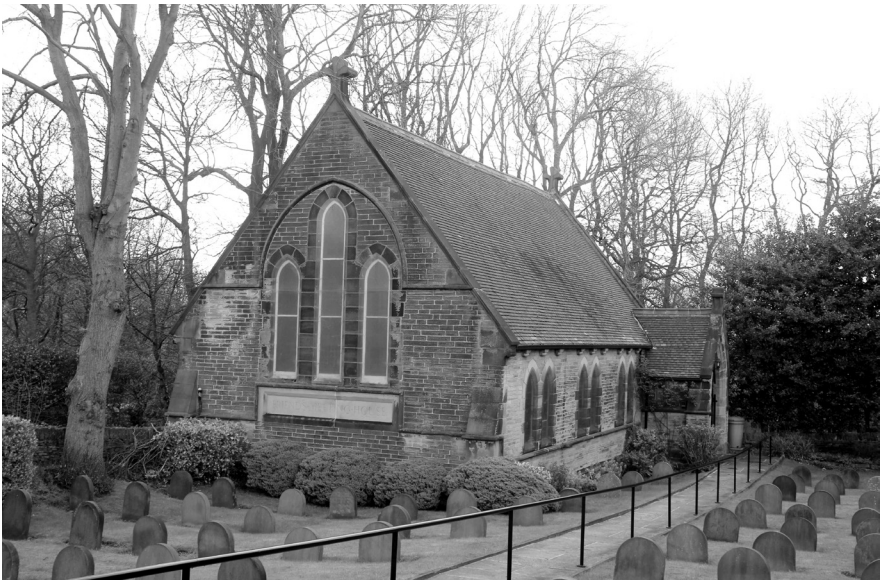
THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

Newsletter 66 September 2017



The modest Gothic exterior of Scholes Friends Meeting House
[photograph copyright Roger Holden]

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NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

30 September 2017	Conference (jointly with the Ecclesiological Society) on the architecture of less-well-studied denominations at the St Alban centre, London.
28 October 2017	Bristol visit (David Dawson & Stephen Duckworth)

EDITORIAL

This *Newsletter* will go out with details of our visit to Bristol and Kingswood, including to the refurbished New Room, in October. Our visits programme for next year is not yet finalised but we expect to have visits to Birmingham, probably concentrating on Bournville, in the spring and to West Sussex in the autumn. The AGM will be in London, probably at St George's German Lutheran Church, near Aldgate, and followed by a walking tour of places of worship on the east side of the City. Details will appear in the next *Newsletter*.

PROCEEDINGS

VISIT TO WEST YORKSHIRE – 1 APRIL 2017

Millstone grit walls and cottages, an unfolding mixture of open countryside and post-industrial townscape, chapel graveyards, effective preparation and leadership, chapel welcomes, just a little rain, and of course congenial company: these among other factors characterised the excellent day enjoyed by 29 members and friends within a small part of what was once the Yorkshire Heavy Woollen District. After lengthy or modest road or rail travel from both sides of the Pennines, the South and East Coasts, Hertfordshire, Cheshire and elsewhere, we met at either Leeds Railway Station or Saltaire's Methodist Church. Five buildings awaited our exploration: others seen in passing included Mill Hill Unitarian, Leeds, and Cleckheaton's former Providence Place Congregational/URC.

Hot drinks and biscuits welcomed us to **Saltaire Methodist Church**. Nowhere in this model industrial village is without its particular reference to the founder, Titus Salt: it was he who gave the land for the Wesleyan's first, 1868 building; the architects as for the whole Saltaire plan were Lockwood & Mawson. That chapel saw its Centenary: copies of the 1968 pamphlets were helpfully available, the anniversary preacher being this writer's own 1940s minister in the Kentish suburbs; serendipity is common on these visits. The current 1972 premises of re-used stone are still on two levels, the chapel totally unlike its galleried predecessor: lectern, table and font face the congregation from a low, seven-sided dais; mostly clear glass illuminates this attractive light building; strong modern chairs keep a traditional layout for the 40-plus Sunday worshippers; today's increasingly common screen supplements various hymnbooks. Building, contents and displays exhibited the current lively witness of a committed congregation.

The interior of Heywood Memorial URC [photograph copyright Roger Holden]

Walking tours within the village uncovered the founder's social philanthropy at its 19th century best: we passed planned housing, hospital, Institute, school, the site of Bath Houses; carved alpacas, reminder of the source of Salt's wool and wealth, were successfully spotted. The 1859 Congregational chapel, briefly against a blue sky, was thankfully free of scaffolding: its added mausoleum is unusual but not unique in British Nonconformity.

Our coach took us next to **Northowram's Heywood Memorial United Reformed Church**, in whose downstairs rooms and from named chapel crockery we ate our packed lunches: the gentle rain and grey stone of this hilltop site had for some been a typical West Yorkshire outdoor welcome; a view from the lane showed a traditional Nonconformity's three levels of windows, the schoolrooms below chapel level. The Presbyterian Oliver Heywood (1630-1702) preached locally an itinerant ministry when suspended before 1662 from his chapelry of Coley; the earliest Northowram preaching of 1672 was followed by a first chapel of 1688; the present chapel dates from 1836-7 and 1853: raked galleries, and the arrangement of pulpit, organ and choir are a modest version of what Yorkshire sometimes calls 'Messiah Chapels'. A separate pulpit is said to date from Heywood's time. Prominent among the graves was one bearing the unusual name of Telemachus: was this chosen from Homer, from the 4th century Christian monk-martyr, or from Tennyson's poem named *Ulysses?* More tellingly, this recorded one among many deaths of 19th century infants.

For many, the two **Moravian** visits were perhaps a first experience of this oldest of Protestant churches, whose official name is *Unitas Fratrum*. Its lamb and flag emblem was prominent on pulpit fronts and banners, the motto 'Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow him' variously in Latin or English. At **Lower Wyke Moravian** chapel of 1775, we were greeted by a notice board reading

Lower Wyke Moravian chapel with the Minister's house on the left [photograph copyright Chris Skidmore]

'Moravian Church. Protestant and Episcopal', a puzzle to some who expected all Dissent or Nonconformity to eschew bishops. The interior of this modest building is galleried to east and west, the pulpit in traditional early dissenting place on the long, south wall: opposite is the organ, its chamber being an external projection beyond the original rectangle; loose chairs arranged in an arc have replaced the downstairs pews. The later, attached minister's house to the west stressed its domestic appearance; the former Sisters' House of 1782 remains nearby although not in chapel use: this and a former school are detached from the chapel, a reminder of how the single members – brethren and sisters – lived separately within a community. Uniform gravestones here recorded just names and dates, the first of three consecutive chapels where we saw this pattern.

The minister's bench at Scholes with its prominent sounding board [photograph copyright Roger Holden]

A visual surprise was the external style of **Scholes Friends Meeting House**, situated just into Kirklees: built in 1883 and in continuous use save briefly for part of the 1960s, this seemed to be a typically 19th century Gothic chapel. David Butler's two-part Inventory, the appropriate Stell volume, or Chris Skidmore's comprehensive introductory notes will have prepared us for this unusual appearance. The ministers' stand remains intact across one of the shorter sides, backed by panelling bending forward above head height to form what Butler names a sounding board: loose, comfortable seats now arranged in an extended horseshoe face the small table, helping to stress community. We could easily gauge the sense of quiet at the twice-weekly Meeting, even if just one or two people might be present: the burial ground outside gave a sense of order and equality.

Our final visit was to the **Fulneck Moravian Settlement**: here again was an historical dependence on an individual, this time the evangelical Anglican Benjamin Ingham whose gift the land had been in 1744. But the modesty of the two previous buildings was here challenged by a larger grandeur of setting and construction. It was difficult to know what impressed or attracted most: the extensive grounds which included the graveyard, traditionally the scene of an Easter morning service, and with flat, simple stones; the extensive terrace apparently exceeded in length in Europe by only Hampton Court and Versailles, and originally embracing separate houses for choir, single brethren, single sisters and widows; the Congregation House containing the now Grade I listed chapel (1748), re-pewed in the 19th century but with its internal woodwork painted in Moravian tradition; or simply the essence of community across the whole site. After their earlier specific usage by various groups, all now contains Fulneck

The distinctive painted interior of the chapel at Fulneck Moravian Settlement [photograph copyright Chris Skidmore]

School, itself of long standing: meanwhile, the continuing local church maintains the distinctive services of the Moravian witness, its lovefeasts included.

Every Society visit is different, even when two buildings are of one denomination, especially when downward views from three different chapel galleries offer three seating patterns beneath. We all always learn something new about the communities, their worship, polity or meeting houses; that learning comes from our hosts or from each other. No two chapels are ever the same; few ever disappoint. Aficionados were well satisfied by graveyards, galleried chapels, notice-boards and chapel crockery: we enjoyed this opportunity to experience Protestant Dissent with a particular Yorkshire flavour, with Moravian interest and heritage, remembering notable names from a past Congregationalism or earlier Presbyterianism, a traditional Methodist heritage not forgotten either. The domestic and travel arrangements ran smoothly; coach driving excelled in crowded residential streets and rural byways; all was very satisfyingly concluded in Fulneck's Tea Room. And our thanks to Chris Skidmore for this fascinating day cannot be overstressed.

Nigel Lemon

VISIT TO OXFORD WITH AGM – 8 JULY 2017

Dissent has been represented among Oxford's places of worship since the mid-17th century. Moreover Oxford is recognised as the birthplace of Methodism. Fittingly therefore the Society met for its AGM in **Wesley Memorial Methodist Church** in New Inn Hall Street.

The Meeting was preceded by an illustrated lecture, the first Christopher Stell memorial lecture, by Dr Kate Tiller, entitled 'How to read a Chapel: Cote

Baptist Chapel, Oxfordshire' [Cote Chapel is Grade II* listed and has been in the ownership of the Historic Chapels Trust for over twenty years.[1]]. The formal proceedings were followed by a walking tour of Oxford's non-Anglican chapels devised by Martin Wellings.

First impressions of **Wesley Memorial Methodist Church** (Grade II) are of its lofty scale and confident Victorian Gothic design. Its tall tower and prominent spire joined the famous 'dreaming' spires of Oxford in 1878, dominating the view along New Inn Hall Street and creating a fine termination to St Michael's Street in an obvious gesture of permanence.[2] Methodism was in its Victorian heyday.

Wesley Memorial Methodist Church viewed towards the east window [photograph copyright the author]

The architect to the present church was Charles Bell (1846-99), a prolific designer of Wesleyan chapels in the Gothic style. Bell's building is rectangular, with a shallow chancel and of imposing height that offered scope for handsome stone carved capitals (representing English plants) and large stained glass windows. The magnificent east window (actually at the liturgical west end) depicts flowers and water-plants mentioned in the Bible. In the south gallery are three bold windows supplied by Thomas Cox of London and another by Thomas Camm of Smethwick of 1906 that shows the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement in its colouring and figurework. At the communion end is a rose window.

Extensive, sympathetic re-ordering was carried out from the 1970s to 1990s with chairs replacing pews. A new roundel of clear etched glass by David Pilkington placed between the vestibule and worship space reveals the interior more fully, with smaller, coloured roundels on the south side, integrating the Victorian glass above with modern work. The communion area was moved forward seamlessly towards the congregation.

We moved on to **New Road Baptist Church** (Grade II) in Bonn Square where a meeting house of 1721 was almost completely rebuilt in 1798 and then enlarged

in 1819. The architect to this latter work was John Hudson (*c*1767-1837), Oxfordshire's county surveyor and bridge-builder. The exterior is as one would expect for its date, classical in manner and fashionably stone-fronted, given real presence by its bold beckoning doorcase and idiosyncratic rustication.

New Road Baptist church – modern interior furnishings – (left) terrazzo-tiled baptistery [photograph copyright the author] – (right) large timber cross by Heather Harms [photograph copyright Chris Skidmore]

Its interior was reorganised from 1978-82, chairs replacing pews and a striking, large green terrazzo-tiled baptistery being introduced into the corner of the north wall. A new organ by Bishop and Son of Ipswich arrived in the centre of the gallery above, its delicate detailing reflecting the gentle classicism of the interior. On the north wall above the rostrum a large timber cross designed by Heather Harms has been placed, a powerful piece of design that contrasts with the dove and olive branch on the embroidered rostrum fall below.

St Columba's URC, Alfred Street, was completed in 1915 for the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of England and become part of the United Reformed Church in 1972. Its architect was Thomas Phillips Figgis (1858-1948) who provided a long nave and shallow chancel in a free, self-effacing Gothic manner. He designed the refined carved timber furnishings including the communion table, pulpit and lectern. The latter features the 'burning bush' observed by Moses in the Old Testament which became a key symbol of Presbyterianism.

The chancel windows, designed by Margaret Voelker and made by Theodora Salusbury, are inserted high up in the chancel – vividly illustrating the theme of the 'Voice of the Lord' from the Psalms. They also remind us of the emerging significance of women craftspeople at this time.

Alas the streetside let us down horribly with a feeble rebuild of 1961, erected to look 'contemporary' but sitting uneasily beside Figgis' carefully restrained work. Inside the entrance vestibule is displayed the Iona Plate, given in memory

of a former minister that together with other commemorative items reinforces the Scottish connection. Many articles are on view relating to the church's history and moving memorials to those lost in war.[3]

The Chapel of Harris Manchester College (Unitarian), surprisingly listed only at grade II, was our next port of call. The chapel dates from 1893 and was designed by Thomas Worthington (1826-1909), a Unitarian who was architect of Manchester's Albert Memorial. The most remarkable feature of the interior is the ravishing stained glass designed by Edward Burne-Jones from 1895-1899.[4] The glass depicting the Six Days of Creation on the north wall is especially memorable where crimson-winged angels recreate the unfolding sequence of events described in the Book of Genesis. On the opposite side of the chapel the stained glass displays virtues such as generosity, charity and humility. The large west window (above the communion table) reflects the distinctive, non-Trinitarian, character of Unitarian thought.

Harris Manchester College Chapel – (left) the sanctuary [photograph copyright Chris Skidmore] and (right) detail of pew end carving [photograph copyright the author]

Yet the carved timberwork of the hammer-beam roof and of the furnishings are of equally outstanding quality. The pew ends alone should be noted for their variety and vitality. They date from 1897, the glorious oak screen from 1896.[5] In order for congregants and visitors to appreciate these glories better the college authorities might consider reviewing the lighting in the chapel which is currently somewhat dim.

Mansfield College Chapel, Mansfield Road, grade II*, is now the huge college dining hall. The college opened in 1889 to train Congregational ministers. It was granted full Oxford college status as recently as 1995. Architect of the college's

Mansfield College Chapel by Basil Champneys
[photograph copyright the author]

extensive range of buildings was Basil Champneys (1842-1935) for which he devised a dignified, free Gothic manner, partly enclosing a large garden.

The broad spectrum of theological thinking embraced in Congregationalism and the many-stranded influences upon the history of the denomination are expressed in historical figure sculpture by Robert Bridgeman. He was later to work with Champneys at the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Within the chapel, the theme of Enlightenment continues with a display of historical figures commemorated in stained glass surrounded by clear white glass. The craftsmanship as at Manchester College is of outstanding quality, notably its intricate Gothic Revival woodwork.

Our return walk to Wesley Memorial Church ended a memorable afternoon of astonishing revelations among chapels that are among the least known in the city. A delicious tea awaited us in the large community hall following a day we shall all treasure. I am grateful to Martin Wellings for the welcome notes he provided on the day about the chapels we visited.

Jenny Freeman

1 A fully illustrated *Guide to Cote Chapel* written by Kate Tiller is available from the Historic Chapels Trust (chapels@hct.org.uk).
2 See church leaflets, undated, with unnamed authors – *Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford, A Brief History* and *Welcome to Wesley Memorial Methodist church.*
3 Gordon Woods, *A Guide to St Columba's United Reformed Church, Oxford*, Church of Scotland and URC Chaplaincy to Oxford University, 2006.
4 A.C. Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and his Circle*, Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, 1974.
5 Alan J. Middleton, *The Chapel of Harris Manchester College, Oxford*, Harris Manchester College, 2006.

FOUNDATION STONES

A SHORT ARTICLE BY ROD AMBLER

The foundation stones and commemorative bricks that are witnesses to the generosity, effort, and financial sacrifices of the people responsible for building chapels provide a fascinating element in their history. Demolition, alterations to buildings, even the unsatisfactory quality of the materials used for the stones, mean that their survival can be uncertain.

Yet they are evocative of the lives and endeavours of the communities that lay behind the buildings, and any effort to record and even preserve them is to be welcomed. Martyn Turner of the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District Civic Society has set out, on behalf of the Society, to record the foundation stones of Grimsby and Cleethorpes. This proved to be 'a larger and more complicated' project than he had anticipated, and came to include, not only chapels, but any buildings with foundation stones, as well as metal plaques, and stones and plaques stored in the local Museum Service store.

The resulting compilation is divided into five sections: Education (21 entries), Religious Establishments (25), Municipal Buildings (29), Housing Developments (8), buildings erected as Coronation/Jubilee Celebration Dwellings (7), and a Miscellaneous Section (14). Each of the buildings for which a stone is listed is illustrated, and there is, with other material, a photograph of the stones and plaques, together with a copy of the inscription on them.

The section on Religious Establishments not only includes chapel buildings such as Scartho Methodist church first built in 1868, with additions in in 1910 and 1938, but also buildings that are the product of religiously based philanthropic effort. The stones at Scartho reflect the development of the Methodist community in what became a suburban village, with the first laid by Francis Sowerby of Aylesby, and others, of later date, that simply record the names of individuals and groups whom, it must be assumed, contributed to the cost of the building. They include 'J. Whitely Wilkin, Esq., J.P.', the 'Ladies Sewing Guild', and 'Members of the Choir', and can be read as a reflection of changes in chapel life over the period during which the building was built and extended. Francis Sowerby was a circuit grandee, who came from outside the village for the opening of the 1910 chapel. J. Whitely Wilkin represents a shift in chapel membership and leadership – a Methodist who had ascended to the magisterial bench, and representative of the people who were beginning to change Scartho as it moved from an agricultural past. The stones laid on behalf of chapel groups are indicative of the place of Methodism in the changing social life of Scartho.

The foundation stone of the hostel built by the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen in Grimsby was laid, in 1966, by J. Carl Ross, described in the

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [*ODNB*] as 'fisheries entrepreneur', on Saturday 16th July 1966. It acknowledges the religious impulse behind the Mission's work by noting that it was laid 'To the Glory of God and in service of Fishermen'. Religious sentiments were missing for what was a memorial rather than foundation stone on an earlier hostel, built for the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen. It had the simple record: 'This building was opened by H.R.H. Princess Mary, Viscountess Lascelles, April 23, 1925'.

The stones at Grimsby's Sir Moses Montefiore Synagogue, and the way that their inscriptions mix the use of Jewish Chronology with Gregorian dating, reflect the development of the town's Jewish community. The foundation stone, which also has a three line Hebrew inscription, was laid by F.D. Mocatta, of London, a Jewish philanthropist in the Reform tradition, on 22 July, in the year 5645 [1885]. His interest in 'The situation of the Jews in eastern Europe' which, according to the *ODNB* 'engaged his constant attention' accorded well with a Jewish community that had its origins in migration from that area. The commemorative stone laid for the synagogue's Jubilee Year, also with three lines of Hebrew, has the dates 1885-1935, and September 1935.

The varied condition of stones, often reflecting the quality of the material that was used for them, means that, despite the best efforts of recorders, inscriptions can be lost. While twenty two initialled bricks survive on either side of the entrance to Grimsby's Salvation Army 'Barracks' – so described on the building's clearly visible and legible date stone – the four sandstone blocks that flank the entrance are so damaged that they are totally undecipherable, with nothing to be gleaned from them about the opening of the building in 1888, or the people concerned in it.

The builders of Park Congregational Church used more durable material for their foundation stone laid on 16 February 1906, which appears on the front cover of the Grimsby collection. Its significance and interest has been enhanced by the fact that its lettering has recently been re-gilded in what must be taken as a statement of pride in the church's identity. While the stone states that it was laid by the Secretary on behalf of the officers and members, it also identifies the builder and architect. In towns the size of Grimsby names such as these are a thread in a dynamic pattern of building in the 19th and 20th centuries, reflecting the development of the towns.

It is good to have on record the stones on which this material is to be found. Martyn Turner and the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District Civic Society are to be congratulated on their endeavours. The *Local List of Foundation Stones in Grimsby and Cleethorpes* can be obtained from Martyn at 15 Park Drive, Grimsby, DN32 0EF for £25, including post and packing.

NEWS AND NOTES

Avebury chapel saved

The small early Congregational chapel in the centre of the stone circle at Avebury has, been purchased by the National Trust, which already owns most of the stone circle and many houses on the World Heritage Site.

The cause dates from at least 1670 when congregations from Marlborough, Devizes and Calne decided to meet at Avebury – beyond the prohibited distance from each of the towns specified in the Five Mile Act. The building was of shaped sarsen stones and originally had a double hipped roof: it was first registered in 1707. Its present shape dates from a mid-18th century rebuilding which added 10 feet in length and raised the roof to accommodate a gallery. Despite a large restoration project in the 1990s and its additional use as a council tourist information centre, declining congregations eventually led to the chapel being put up for sale in 2015.

Purchase by the Trust ends this period of uncertainty. The Trust's vision is to develop 'this unique and beautiful building into a welcome and information space for both local communities and visitors to share our passion for the landscape, its abundant nature and world-renowned archaeology.'

Another pew mystery

Following the visit to Oxford in July, I received the following photograph from Rosalind Kaye:

She asks: 'During the Chapels Society Visit to Oxford on 8 July we encountered a puzzle at the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church. A total of four 10cm pieces of curtain wire, such as that used to support net curtains, had been attached to the back of the highest pews in the gallery, two on the east side, two on the west. The wire was taut so nothing more substantial than paper or card could have been slipped behind them. What was their purpose? Are they found in other Methodist Churches?'

Do members have any suggestions?

A list of Gloucestershire chapels

My inveterate correspondent, Frank Law, alerted me to the website of Hidden Heritage, which specialises in Gloucestershire genealogy and carries a list of over 600 chapels [http://www.hidden-heritage.co.uk/services/sources/nonconformist-churches/]. Each entry gives the parish location, denomination and a mix of other brief details such as the foundation year, and any date of closure or new use: the authors welcome additions and corrections.

Chapel death

The dangers of leaving redundant chapels simply to decay were amply illustrated on 19 July in Cardiff when the former Splott Road Baptist Church collapsed during demolition, killing one worker and trapping two others, who escaped with minor injuries.

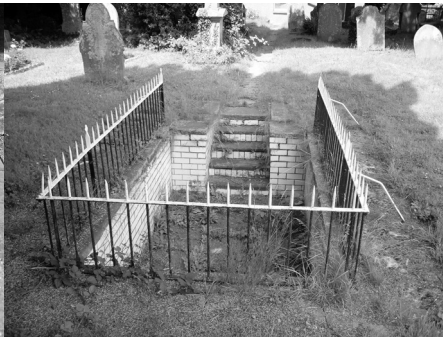
The building was built in 1893 on a corner site backing onto the main London-South Wales railway line. The chapel had been disused since 1983 and a report for Cardiff Council in 2016 had described the structure as at risk of 'imminent collapse'.

Demolition was partly to remove this danger, particularly as upgrading was planned for the railway line and the neighbouring bridge, but also because a redevelopment of the site had finally been agreed [photograph copyright Wales News Service].

Open-air baptisteries – the list continues

New member, Gerald Charmley, asks why it was thought that so few open-air baptisteries are surviving? The brief answer is that your editor, looking for an interesting tidbit for this column, foolishly repeated, unchecked, something he read on the internet. There must be a lesson there!

But to continue, Gerald tells me of a further one in England – a baptismal pool at Carleton Rode, near Attleborough in Norfolk – and sends information of three more Welsh examples, this time in the county of Gwent. Pictured opposite are (on the left) the Grade II listed baptistery at Lisvane, near Cardiff, just north of the M4, now on private land, the chapel having been sold and converted into a house. The second (on the right) is at Bethel Baptist, Bassaleg, less than ten miles to the east.



A third Gwent example is at Pandy, north of Abergavenny, where Zoar Baptist chapel is on the banks of the River Honddu and simply has steps leading down into the river!

The Particular Baptist Fund reaches 300

The Particular Baptist Fund was founded by the six London churches in 1717 and is still supporting the education and financial support of those in full-time ministry, including pastors, youth workers and evangelists. Our busy President, Tim Grass, has written a history of the fund for the tercentenary, entitled *Money, Mission and Ministry* which is published by Gipping Press at £6 [ISBN:978-0-9954-7365-2].

Changes in Heritage Lottery funding

There has been much concern at the Heritage Lottery Fund's decision to close its Grants for Places of Worship (GPOW) scheme, which was earmarked for listed places of worship. In the future, churches and chapels will have to apply to HLF's two schemes 'Our Heritage' and 'Heritage Grants' in competition with other sites. The GPOW has since 1994 distributed some £850 million to 5600 places of worship. Although spending rate could increase now places of worship have access to a larger pot, understandably there are worries that funding will decrease. Further information about the changes and the efforts being made to influence the course of events can be found on the website of the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance [http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/consultations-2/hlf-closure-of-gpow/].

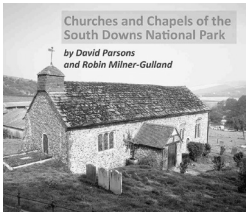
For your diary

The Friends of the Congregational Library are organising a study day in Hampstead Garden Suburb – 'A pleasant place to live!' on Saturday 23 September. For more information please contact Andrea Protheroe, Honorary Secretary, Friends of the Congregational Library (ap090310@gmail.com).

The Strict Baptist History Society is organising a History Day on Martin Luther at Jireh Baptist Church, Wigan, on Saturday 25 November starting at 10 am. For more details contact Pam Thomas on 01942 218717 or 07805 020437 or pthomas168@uwclub.net.

BOOK REVIEW

Churches and Chapels of the South Downs National Park by David Parsons and Robin Milner-Gulland. Lewes: Sussex Archaeological Society, 2017. 138 pages, paperback. £12.50. ISBN 978-0-904973-27-3. Available through the Sussex Archaeological Society.



This is a very attractive book, full of pictures and well laid out. It's the sort of book that will comfortably fit in the car and be a great resource when visiting the South Downs. I've rarely visited this part of Britain and this attractive volume certainly makes me wish to make good this shortfall. In the introduction, the authors inform the reader that in the South Downs National Park there are 'well over 200 places of worship and thus it cannot be a comprehensive guide', and so they have decided to 'focus on some 50 buildings of particular interest'. The book is divided into several introductory essays – which mentions other places of worship in passing – followed by the Gazetteer of the chosen 50 buildings. The introductory essays are indeed very introductory and the Reformation is rapidly covered with but a few scant words on the development of religious dissent, and here is where I'm afraid I'll have to have a grumble.

Although the authors state that 'Sussex was a hotbed of dissent', Nonconformist buildings are strikingly absent in this book. In the whole volume, probably only a half-dozen examples are briefly mentioned with only one building, Ditchling Old Meeting House, in the Gazetteer. The Roman Catholic church fares slightly better. I'm sure there are a few more Nonconformist places of worship worth a visit, and I'll make a plea here for anyone in the Chapel Society with knowledge of this area to write up their favourite chapel or meeting house as a 'Chapel of the Month' for our web-page. It's when I encounter such general Church surveys that I realise that the Chapels Society has a very important role, with much to do. Let's hope for a Chapels Society event in this part of the world in the near future. Grumble aside, this is a lovely little book, full of useful architectural details which will enrich any visit to this part of the world.

Moira Ackers

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