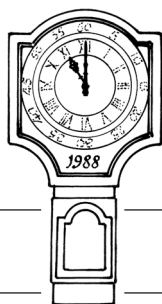


# THE CHAPELS SOCIETY



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Newsletter 72

September 2019

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*Zion Congregational Chapel, Wakefield, of 1844, was closed in 2002  
but still dominates the townscape complete with the additional floor  
added during its conversion to apartments  
(photograph copyright John Ellis)*

# ADDRESS BOOK

The Chapels Society: registered charity number 1014207

Website: <http://www.chapelsociety.org.uk>

*President:* Bill Jacob, 4 St Mary's Walk, London SE11 4UA; e-mail: [wmjacob15@gmail.com](mailto:wmjacob15@gmail.com)

*Secretary:* Martin Wellings, 26 Upland Park Road, Oxford OX2 7RU; e-mail: [ChapelsSociety@googlemail.com](mailto:ChapelsSociety@googlemail.com) (for general correspondence and website)

*Treasurer:* John Ellis, 24 Shrublands Court, Mill Crescent, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1PH; e-mail: [john.ellis@urc.org.uk](mailto:john.ellis@urc.org.uk); phone: 01732 353914

*Visits Secretary:* John Anderson, 3 The Vale, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4AG; e-mail: [andersonhillside@btinternet.com](mailto:andersonhillside@btinternet.com); phone: 01260 276177

*Membership Secretary:* Stuart Leadley, 52 Southwood Avenue, Cottingham, East Yorks HU16 5AD; e-mail: [sjleadley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sjleadley@hotmail.co.uk)

*Casework Officer:* Michael Atkinson, 47 Kitchener Terrace, North Shields NE30 2HH; e-mail: [info@atkinsonarchitecture.co.uk](mailto:info@atkinsonarchitecture.co.uk)

*Editor:* Chris Skidmore, 46 Princes Drive, Skipton BD23 1HL; e-mail: [chrisskidmore@waitrose.com](mailto:chrisskidmore@waitrose.com); phone: 01756 790056 (correspondence *re* the *Newsletter* and other Society publications). **Copy for the next (January 2020) *Newsletter* needs to reach the Editor by 30 November 2019, please.**

# NOTICEBOARD

## CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

After the 28th September trip to Norwich, advertised in May, we have no dates yet finalised for future trips. It is likely that the spring trip in 2020 will be to Pilgrim Father country around Gainsborough and Retford, the summer trip and AGM is scheduled for London in late June / early July and the autumn visit will be to the area around Altrincham in Greater Manchester. We hope to have all the dates in the January *Newsletter*.

# EDITORIAL

It was good to see such a large turnout of members at the AGM in Stoke-on-Trent this year and to be able to welcome so many new faces onto Council – the number of Council members under 50 has substantially increased! However the risks to our Nonconformist heritage have not gone away and there is much for the Society to do. Please let us know if there are things that the Society doesn't do at present that you would like Council to think about doing.

I would be remiss if I did not record here a hearty vote of thanks to our retiring officers – to Tim Grass, president for the last six years, who has ably guided Council and encouraged us to look further afield, leading trips to the Isle of Man and Edinburgh, and not least to Moira Ackers, secretary for the last four years, who has efficiently kept up with the paperwork, reminded us of our duties as Trustees and put up with the editor's tendency to nag and to argue about punctuation! We wish them both well for the future and hope to see them at Society events.

# PROCEEDINGS

## VISIT TO WAKEFIELD – 18 MAY 2019

As the newspapers were filled with a new round of speculation about the Government's dream of a 'Northern Powerhouse', a party of over 30 gathered in the Victorian Nonconformist powerhouse of the West Riding of Yorkshire. In the former county town of Wakefield there were plenty of chapels within walking distance of each other to create a full day's walking tour. We were indebted to David Leyshon and Colin Dews for organising the tour at relatively short notice and for leading us with enthusiasm on the day.



*Westgate Unitarian Chapel, Wakefield  
(photograph copyright the author)*

Conveniently alongside Wakefield Westgate railway station is the Unitarian Chapel which captured so much of the intermingled story of chapel people and civic pride. A Presbyterian congregation dating from 1662 had the very fine chapel erected in 1752, shortly before the congregation became formally Unitarian. The pulpit from the previous chapel was incorporated. Attractively set in its own graveyard, the chapel is also notable for having burial vaults which we were able to explore. After a member of the Sunday School was killed crossing the road

to the large school building, another subterranean tunnel was constructed to provide a safe passage to and from the chapel.

When Wakefield gained a right to its own MP in 1832, the honour fell on Daniel Gaskell, a member of the chapel. He has an elaborate monument beside the pulpit, and his coffin was one of the last to be sealed in its slot in the burial vault in 1875. This may also have been the only chapel the Society has visited which had on display photographs which claimed to show ghosts moving around the premises. This illustrated, if nothing else, how far the contemporary congregation has moved from the orthodoxy of their Presbyterian ancestors.

St Augustine's Roman Catholic Church was built as early as 1827-8, before the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, although the locals who organised a riot against the 'papist chapel' clearly did not regard this as enlightened progress. The plain, rectangular, brick building had a simplicity more often associated with denominations at the opposite end of the theological spectrum and it seemed appropriate that the present priest is a former Methodist. However in 1878 the York-born inventor of the Hansom cab, Joseph Hansom, was responsible for extensions and alterations in an Italianate style, including a new sanctuary and octagonal Lady Chapel.



*Wakefield Chantry Chapel on the old bridge across the River Calder  
(photograph copyright the author)*

Before the tour resumed after lunch on the other side of the city centre, some members played truant to visit the Anglican Cathedral, fresh and light after its major 2012 reordering, or even the newly restored Wakefield Kirkgate railway station of 1854. All interest and age groups were together again on the old bridge over the River Calder to see its Chantry Chapel which, despite many restorations, retains a feel of its fourteenth century origins. It is one of only four such chapels left in the country and is listed Grade I. A Friends' group works hard to keep it in the public eye and in use for a variety of services and events.

We then saw from the outside several examples of what different denominations felt was appropriate for their premier Wakefield chapels in a different age. The Methodist New Connexion Grove Road chapel of 1866 was a Gothic example of the widespread MNC work of William Hill and enough of its façade survived conversion to apartments to imagine it in its prime. The half century since it closed for worship has not been kind to the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Market Street but almost opposite the United Methodist Free Church remains an impressive building, at least externally. Although closed in 1935, the three-bayed facade with Corinthian pilasters still signalled solidity, integrity and civic weight, just as Wakefield's first mayor doubtless intended when he chaired the building committee in 1848.

Close by was the even more formidable building of Zion Congregational Church of 1844. By the end of the twentieth century the depopulation of the city centre had left a congregation of 20 quite unable to sustain such a huge edifice and it closed in 2002. Conversion to apartments has resulted in the addition of another floor on the original roof, which might be judged to have more economic than aesthetic merit. Nearby was a surviving sign of the influence Zion once had in the form of a neat row of almshouses opened in 1863. A Zion worshipper, Caleb Crowther, endowed these and another Zion worshipper, William Shaw, was the architect. Accommodation was offered to those in need provided they were not Roman Catholics, Anglicans, solicitors or Tories.

Our final call was at a chapel built in 1844 for a Baptist congregation. That congregation followed Wakefield population shifts and moved to a different location in 1937, after which an Assemblies of God congregation used the premises. The two fellowships maintained excellent relationships and the Baptists gave the AoG free credit for the years it took them to raise the funds to buy the chapel. It was renamed the Glad Tidings Hall and more recently renamed again as the New Life Christian Centre.

Externally the chapel is little altered and on a prominent site. Internally, it might have been a disappointment for some Chapels Society members as only the gallery pews give much impression of the original fittings and furnishings. Kevin Foster, the Senior Pastor, explained the rationale for changing radically the rostrum and other areas for a new generation of worshippers. Unlike most of the other chapels we had seen, this one has a thriving Sunday congregation





*The New Life Christian Centre Wakefield, built 1844 for a Baptist congregation, retains its dominant position above what was once the cattle market  
(photograph copyright the author)*

and uses its central site to offer a range of services to the community, especially the most needy. The premises are in use every day of the week and on six days morning, afternoon and evening, are filled with groups ranging from a social gathering for Portuguese speakers via an all-age Guitar Group to Christian discipleship groups. As part of their community outreach, the church also sponsors the Wakefield football team.

Members of the New Life church then served us a generous tea. As we ate, we could contemplate the different ways in which the congregations, past and present, whose lives we had touched during the day, had each chosen to respond to the challenges of a changing city.

*John Ellis*

## VISIT TO STOKE-ON-TRENT AND ENGLESEA BROOK – 6 JULY 2019

There was a distinctly Methodist flavour to this year's AGM day in the Potteries. Other denominations were glimpsed or mentioned only in passing.

Members assembled for the Society's Annual General Meeting in the **Longton Methodist Central Hall**, out of the persistent rain, which fortunately was to abate before the time came to move on for the afternoon's programme of visits. The business of the AGM concluded, and Professor Peter Ackers' Stell Lecture on the connections between the labour movement and Nonconformity enjoyed, we were able to explore the Central Hall with the assistance of an introductory talk and the visit notes, both provided by John Anderson. The first Methodist chapel in the Lane End area was built in the 1780s; the building now known as the Central Hall was opened for worship as the Stafford Street Wesleyan Chapel in 1842, altered in 1877, and transformed into a central hall in the early 1930s. An aerial photograph showed how the new frontage was built onto the existing building, the old pediment remaining visible. Inside, a crush hall, tip-up seats in the gallery, and a projection room remain as the legacy of the cinema style adopted for the central halls. New modern seating on the main floor serves the



*This photograph of the interior of Bethesda Methodist chapel, Hanley, taken from behind the pulpit gives some impression of the size of the twice-enlarged building  
(photograph from [www.armsons.com](http://www.armsons.com))*

existing congregation, and the interior has been splendidly re-painted in recent years. There is also a large suite of ancillary rooms available for community use and which served for consumption of packed lunches, supplemented with tea and biscuits served by members of the church.

After lunch, we boarded the coach to make our way through heavy and sometimes very slow-moving traffic to Hanley. The slow going did enable us to admire the exterior of the Fenton Baptist Church, a large variety of pottery and brewery buildings, and views of the hills of Stoke.

While built in the same form as Longton Central Hall, **Bethesda** has a different feel, magnificent but suffering the inevitable effects of closure and the prolonged period of disuse and neglect before it was transferred to the Historic Chapels Trust in 2002. There was broken

and missing glazing in the doors, decayed plasterwork, large amounts of dust, and a decidedly chilly feel even in July. Fortunately, the future looks more promising. John Booth from the the Friends of Bethesda was able to explain the work undertaken so far as part of a three-phase restoration programme. The roof has been replaced, and the building made waterproof, pigeon-proof, and secure. The ceiling has been restored, complete with an impressive round centre-piece. There are monthly open days and occasional services. Up in the gallery, claims for a capacity of the chapel of over 2000 sittings are easily believed. The upper seating area is large, steeply raked, and with unobstructed views of the tall pulpit. There was also a mysterious chain in a small cupboard, purpose unknown.

Aboard the coach again on the way to Burslem, we passed the Methodist New Connexion Bethel of 1824 before pausing at the **Swan Bank Church**, somewhat to the bemusement of the locals trying to use the adjacent bus stop. The chapel is very different to Longton and Bethesda, a modern building of 1971 constructed to the designs of local architects Hulme Upright and Partners. Behind, the old school and meeting rooms loom, now a clearly well-used complex of community buildings.

On to **Englesea Brook**, the final venue for the day. Definitely rural rather than urban, the small Primitive Methodist chapel opened in 1828. John Anderson again mounted the pulpit to give an overview of its history and importance in the emergence of Primitive Methodism as a separate denomination. The chapel was enlarged and gallery inserted in 1832, school-room added 1914. The astonishing

elaborate chandelier is of 1882, the loud ticking clock of date undetermined. Through a side door from the chapel is the compact but tidy Museum of Primitive Methodism, opened in 1986. A variety of exhibits is on display, with the usual explanatory notices. Across the road, a small burial ground, among the graves that of 'the venerable Hugh Bourne, chief founder of the Primitive Methodists', suitably marked with a dignified monument. Refreshed with scones and cakes provided by the good people of the museum and having pillaged their second-hand book stall, we boarded the coach for the last time to return to Stoke railway station or the car park at Longton to make our various ways home in more typical July weather.



*The front elevation of Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum (photograph copyright Chris Skidmore)*

*Stuart Leadley*



## REPORT OF THE THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Chapels Society AGM was held on the 6th July at Longton Methodist Hall, Stoke-on-Trent. 36 people attended both the AGM and the tour of Stoke-on-Trent & Englesea Brook, which followed.

Following the usual opening business Tim Grass, President, gave a short report. He was standing down as President. He welcomed such a good turnout. This was his last duty as President of the Chapels Society having served two terms in office. He was glad to be able to welcome several new members to the Council, which will be at full strength this year including a Visits Secretary. It was encouraging to see younger people willing to become Council members. The membership had stayed steady and the year's visits had been successful. Tim reminded us that we should look forward to organising another conference, suggesting that we might wish to do another joint conference with another Society.

The Honorary Secretary's report was given by Moira Ackers, who is also standing down after the AGM. She asked members to offer contributions for our website such as 'Chapel of the Month' as the website is a very important way to promote the Society. Although we are a small society, we do have a depth of specialist knowledge. This is something that can be shared, we need to make contact with the larger heritage organisations such as the National Trust, Churches Conservation Trust and the Historic Chapels Trust who have responsibility for many chapels in their care. We should also work with other smaller groups like ourselves with shared interests.

John Ellis gave the Treasurer's report which he summed up as, 'Steady as she goes'. Members subscriptions provide 70% of the total income which funds our activities. The year's visits provided a modest surplus which would underwrite any shortfall in future visits. The Hon Editor's report was given by Chris Skidmore. This year *All Chapels Great and Small*, our third *Journal* had been published. The articles were the result of our joint conference with the Ecclesiological Society in 2017. The *Newsletter* comes out three times a year and articles were always very welcome.

Bill Jacob was elected President with the other Honorary Officers; Martin Wellings as Secretary, Chris Skidmore as Editor and John Ellis as Treasurer. The Society has six elected members of Council. Stuart Leadley and Kate Tiller were willing to continue. We had four nominations to Council; Edward Royle, Roger Holden, Caitriona McCartney and Gerard Charmley who were all elected. Stuart has agreed to continue as Membership Secretary. John Anderson had already taken on the role of Visits Secretary and Michael Atkinson who is our Casework Officer has also agreed to continue in this role and both will be co-opted onto Council. Which means we now have a

complete Council with all positions filled. The AGM would like to record their thanks and appreciation of all the work done on Council by Tim Grass, Jenny Freeman & Peter Ackers.

The AGM appointed Alexander Calder as our Independent Financial Examiner. Tim closed the AGM by advertising our next visits day at Norwich on the 28th September. The AGM was followed by the Christopher Stell Memorial Lecture given by Peter Ackers on *Nonconformist Chapels as Local Worlds of Labour, Social History & Cultural Christianity*.

Moiria Ackers

## PERSONALIA

As you will have seen in the account above there have been a larger than normal number of changes in our Council this year and the new members have the opportunity to introduce themselves in what follows.

**Gerard Charmley:** I was born in Norwich and grew up in Norfolk, being raised in the Church of England. After winning a scholarship to what was then the University of Wales, Aberystwyth to study modern history and politics, I became more aware of the rich history of Nonconformity, and of chapel architecture, in part due to the wonderful chapels in the town. During my final year at university I began to worship at Alfred Place Baptist Chapel in the town, probably the first time that I had been inside a chapel for a service. Following teacher training at Aberystwyth and a brief period teaching history in Cleethorpes, I entered the financial services industry, initially working for Norwich Union at their head office, and latterly for what is now Direct Line Group. Somehow, during this time, I managed to fit in an MA in Welsh History at Cardiff University and PhD at Swansea University, the latter on D.A. Thomas, Viscount Rhondda, a subject which had tangential reference to Nonconformity (Thomas having in his youth wanted to be minister of a church with marble columns!).

I have published numerous articles, among them several on Nonconformist culture and the response of Nonconformity to changing social conditions, in both peer-reviewed and denominational historical journals. In addition to this work, I have also published a couple of pieces on eighteenth-century hymn-writers, both English and Welsh. My hobbies include reading and collecting chapel histories and photographing chapels, both of which highlight the tremendous losses which have taken place in the last century, and even in recent years. I recall visiting Rotherham soon after the fire at Masbro' chapel and getting some photographs of the ruins before they were cleared.

After spending some years in South Wales, I moved to Leeds, West Yorkshire in 2011, where I currently live and work. I am a preacher among the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists in addition to working in insurance claims.

**Roger Holden:** I have been a member of the Chapels Society since 1992 and a regular attender on the programme of visits. I was involved with organising visits to Rossendale in 2005 and Bowland & Pendle in 2014. I have contributed to the *Newsletter* on a number of occasions. Since 1997 I have also been a member of CAPEL – Cymdeithas Treftadaeth Y Capeli/The Chapels Heritage Society.

I have recently taken early retirement from a career in engineering, during which I attained Chartered Engineer status. This has enabled me to devote more time to my 'second career' as a historian. I hold a Certificate in Local History from Manchester University and an MPhil in History from the Open University. My MPhil thesis was subsequently published as a book *Stott & Sons: Architects of the Lancashire Cotton Mill*. I have since published three other books and several papers, mainly in the pages of *Industrial Archaeology Review*, relating to the industrial archaeology of the Lancashire cotton industry. I am a member of the Association for Industrial Archaeology, the Newcomen Society for the History of Engineering and Technology, and the Victorian Society.

More recently I have become a member of the Brethren Archivists and Historians Network, contributing a series of papers on the Exclusive Brethren to the bi-annual Brethren History conferences which have been published in the series *Studies in Brethren History*. I am also a member of the Friends' Historical Society and the Strict Baptist Historical Society.

I was brought up amongst the Exclusive Plymouth Brethren. Despite their confusions, the Brethren taught me, in the words of the hymn by Heyman Wreford, one thing of infinite value, that 'Christ is the saviour of sinners'. Subsequently I spent some time worshiping with the Society of Friends (Quakers) but am now a member of, and treasurer of, Grace Baptist Church, Stockport.

**Bill Jacob** has been a member of the Society for about ten years. Prior to his retirement he was an Anglican archdeacon, looking after the City of Westminster in London diocese, where prime responsibilities were care of buildings and finance. Previously he was engaged in ministerial education, where he had extensive ecumenical contacts, and at Lincoln Theological College trained Methodist as well as Anglican students. He is particularly interested in the social history of religion in England and Wales in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in buildings as evidence for the life of communities and congregations. He has written *Laypeople and religion in the early-eighteenth century*, *The Clerical Profession in long-eighteenth century 1680-1840*, *The Making of the Anglican Church Worldwide*, and contributed the section in *The Church in Wales from the Reformation to Disestablishment*, on 'The Church in Wales 1660-1770'. He has written numerous articles including about John Wesley and Anglican religious societies, church and chapel seating arrangements as microcosms of society, church-buildings 1690-1790, church

silver, and parochial libraries. He is currently completing a book about religion in Victorian London. He is fascinated by the evidence that chapels provide for the changing nature of Nonconformist life, and much enjoys Society outings for providing opportunities for getting access to chapel interiors.

**Caitriona McCartney:** I am an Early Career Researcher examining religious socialisation and formation during the Second World War. I have recently completed my PhD entitled 'British Sunday Schools in the Era of the First World War, 1900-1939'. My wider interests include church history, the role of religion in society, religious education, and the history of warfare. I am also an Honorary Wesley Studies Fellow at St John's College, Durham University.

From a young age I have been interested in church buildings, I have fond memories of visiting various Methodist heritage sites. I also remember my days as a member of the Young Archaeologists Club including writing a project about the architecture of the Silk Museum in Derby. Through my parents I was involved in the book sales which raised money for Englesea Brook Museum of Primitive Methodism. My father's involvement with the Dresden Trust and the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche showed me the significance that church buildings play in cities; when they are missing people do notice. These experiences demonstrated to me the importance of saving church buildings before they are lost forever. Restored and preserved churches have the power to bring communities together, to promote learning, and help to generations to work with one another.

I am passionate about helping to preserve churches for future generations and to help promote the society to a wider audience. I also want to help to attract younger members to the society to help its long-term future.

**Edward Royle** is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of York. After working and publishing on popular irreligion and radicalism in the nineteenth century for many years, he developed a further interest in local and regional religious history, especially of his native Yorkshire. He has edited the visitation returns of the clergy at Bishop Bickersteth's primary visitation of the diocese of Ripon (1858) and Archbishop Thomson's primary visitation of the diocese of York (1865); and has published several short studies of Methodism, served on the the Archives and History Committee of the Methodist Church and is currently President of the Wesley Historical Society. He is also a past member of the Council of the Chapels Society, where he served three years as President (2004-2007).

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

### New Members

We are pleased to be able to welcome Sarah Hall of Southampton, Caitriona McCartney of Derby, and Robert Thornton of Burnley as newly confirmed members of the Society since the last *Newsletter*.

Also very welcome are new corporate members, the Friends of Dukinfield Old Hall Chapel, who are campaigning to save their sixteenth-century grade II\*-listed building, which is in Greater Manchester. More information about the chapel and its place in the history of English Nonconformity is available from their website [www.oldhallchapel.org](http://www.oldhallchapel.org) and news is posted on Facebook – search for ‘Dukinfield Old Hall Chapel’.

The Society was sad to learn of the news of the death of our member Tony Cross of Oxford in June 2019 and we extend our condolences to his friends and family. If anyone has any memories of Tony which they would like to share with the Society, please contact the Honorary Editor or the Membership Secretary.

*Stuart Leadley*

## MALUA OLD CHAPEL

If you want to visit Malua College, you need to fly to New Zealand and then fly a further 1,500 miles to the north east across the Pacific Ocean. After finding Samoa and touching down at Apia airport, take the only road on offer and after an hour driving along the coast you will find the college beside the sea. At its core, it is the theological college of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) and the second oldest college of any denomination in the whole Pacific region.

As Malua College also hosts major church gatherings of the CCCS, the largest Christian community in Samoa, it was decided to build a large enough church to accommodate a thousand worshippers. Several years and £5m later, it now stands majestically on the edge of the college campus alongside the main road, with the cross on its spire a new prominent landmark.

Splendid though this may be, there was a snag familiar to many chapelgoers in Britain. The college values its heritage from the British missionaries and the new church needed the site of the historic college chapel, which many people were very reluctant to lose. The solution was to dismantle the old chapel and re-erect it on the other side of the campus.

What is now the Old Chapel was built to mark the Jubilee of the college’s foundation in 1844 and was finished in 1897. It largely relies on timber construction with the roof an upturned echo of the ocean-going canoes which the missionary John Williams used to bring the Gospel to Samoa in 1830. The College Principal has a special pew with a desk to assist with noting





*The new church at Malua College, Samoa (photograph copyright the author)*

comments on student preachers. A memorial stone commemorates the pioneer missionaries that Malua sent across the Pacific to Papua New Guinea as early as 1883.

The College worships in the chapel every morning. Much of the worship structure and style would sound very familiar to British chapelgoers. The music might make a greater impression. Many of the hymn tunes are imported from Britain, although others come from the Caribbean or North America, and the Samoan words are often translations of English ones. The Samoan people seem naturally musical and almost all the college students and their wives are in the choir. This produces a massed choir of over a hundred for major services, who generate a remarkable sound in many parts. Like a Welsh male voice choir, they know the power of singing evocative words slowly.

The musical life of the Old Chapel starts before the services however. There is no bell to summon the community to chapel. Instead, just outside the Old Chapel there is a raised platform under a roof for shade, where two hollowed out logs of different sizes rest. Ten minutes before a service is due to begin a trio of drummers in the official College uniform start to play these and produce a sonorous and compelling call to worship audible across the campus. About



*Drummers prepare to call Malua College to worship  
(photograph copyright the author)*

three minutes before the service, they stop for a short organ voluntary inside the chapel. Then immediately before the preacher stands up, the drummers resume with a dramatic drum roll. All is ready.

*John Ellis*

## NEWS AND NOTES

### Honours for Chapels Society members

It is not without a certain amount of pride that we can report that not one but two members of the Society (and past or present members of its Council) have been recognised by the Queen for the award of honours this year. Kate Tiller was appointed OBE in the New Years Honours for services to local history and Chris Wakeling, our former President, was appointed OBE in the Birthday Honours for services to heritage. We congratulate them both.

### Pictures of churches and chapels – more internet sites

We have news of two more internet sites for those of you who are interested in photographs of churches and chapels. The first was spotted by member Frank

Law and is at [www.churches-uk-ireland.org](http://www.churches-uk-ireland.org) – this is the project of Steve Bulman who aims to have at least one photo of every existing church in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands, and where possible, photos or artwork of churches no longer in existence. And the site isn't restricted to the historic parish churches – photos of the 'churches' of all religions, denominations and sects are welcome. There are currently about 117,300 photos and illustrations of 33,300 churches and chapels. Fascinatingly there is also a page of photos of unidentified churches for those of you who like a puzzle.

The second site was revealed by a request for the use of an image from our site. This is [www.historyfiles.co.uk/ChurchesBritain/](http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/ChurchesBritain/) by Peter Kessler, whose aim is to provide a tour which progressively leads across the country in an easily-followed trail, county by county. Coverage is as yet patchy but for some places is exhaustive – there must be nearly 100 pictures of churches in Hull!

Both sites are eager to acquire more pictures and are looking for willing collaborators.

### **Primitive Methodist Chapel, Hadleigh, Suffolk**

John Dearing has sent in this picture of a chapel he discovered under conversion to a dwelling in Hadleigh, Suffolk.

He writes that the building is in George Street and currently called Rose Chapel; he assumes it must be the Primitive Methodist chapel of 1875 listed by Stell, who refers to round-headed windows and doorway. Can anyone confirm this?



## BOOK REVIEWS

*Welsh Nonconformity: Historic Chapel Life in Pictures.* Bridgend: Welsh Religious Buildings Trust, 2018. 30 pages, illustrated, paperback. £5. *A Welsh Baptist Trail: A Journey of Discovery around some of the Baptist Chapels of the County of Bridgend.* Bridgend: Welsh Religious Buildings Trust, 2018. 30 pages, illustrated, paperback. Free (£1 postage).



These two booklets, both bi-lingual, have been published by Addoldai Cymru – the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust, which is the Welsh equivalent of the Historic Chapels Trust in England. They may both be ordered online from [www.welshchapels.org](http://www.welshchapels.org).

As its title suggests, the first is an album of photographs, mainly from the collections of the National Library of Wales and the National Museum of Wales (St. Fagans). Although some of the pictures are just of chapels, as the sub-title states chapel life is the focus so we see the people who attended the chapels, as exemplified by the cover photograph of an unidentified group posed outside their chapel, the ladies of which seem to be competing as to who can wear the most extravagant floral hat. Some photographs show chapel interiors, pulpits and organs. There are pictures of communion plate and the all-important chapel china for the serving of teas, featured in a number of photographs. One page has photographs of open-air baptisms, they were tougher in those days. Other groups include Sunday schools, temperance societies and choirs. There are foundation stone laying ceremonies and weddings. Rather more solemnly there are photographs of the dissolution service at Capel Celyn, prior to the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley for the Llyn Celyn reservoir, watched over by two burly policemen. In fact pictures of everything except curiously the main thing the chapels were built for, services of worship. The two photographs that look as if they might be are of a Cymanfa Ganu (singing festival) and a meeting of the Congregational Women's Union. I assume it would not have been considered right, irreverent indeed, to take photographs during services, particularly when cameras were large and ponderous items, slow film speeds requiring everybody to remain very still. A lot of these pictures are undated although dress often suggests approximate dates, I guess the cover photograph is Edwardian.



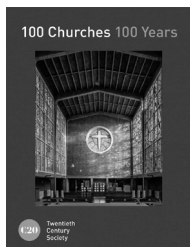
*The impressive Beaux-Arts frontage of Bethania Welsh Baptist Chapel, Maesteg, of 1908 by Sir William Beddoe Rees, now under the care of the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust (photograph copyright Addoldai Cymru)*

The second booklet is a trail round some 21 Baptist chapels in the Bridgend area and the front cover photograph is one of an open air baptism that also appears in the *Historic Chapel Life* booklet. All the chapels are shown on a map and illustrated with a photograph and brief historic details. Further details can be found on the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales's chapels database at [rcahmw.gov.uk/discover/chapels/](http://rcahmw.gov.uk/discover/chapels/) and [www.welshchapels.org](http://www.welshchapels.org). Four of the chapels are given more extended treatment, this includes Bethania, Maesteg, which is now in the ownership of the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust. There is an outline history of Baptists and Welsh Baptists. Unfortunately I noted two errors. The first is a matter of fact. Although in the past Thomas Müntzer has sometimes been credited as the leader of the German Anabaptists (p.8) this is now accepted as being incorrect and indeed he was not an Anabaptist at all. The other may be a typo, General Baptists being described as Armenian (p.13), this should of course be Arminian (the Welsh Arminaid is correct).

*Roger Holden*

*100 Churches 100 Years* edited by Susannah Charlton, Elaine Harwood and Clare Price. London: Batsford (for the Twentieth Century Society), 2019. 208 pages, illustrated, hardcover. ISBN 978-1-84994-514-1. £25.00





The first impression of this volume from the Twentieth Century Society is that it is a very smartly presented book; the second is that there are lots of Anglican churches in it. On closer inspection, the first impression is confirmed. The book is illustrated in full throughout with plenty of colour photographs and is printed on fine quality paper. The second impression is only partly correct, though this requires some close analysis of the contents.

After a Foreword and an Introduction by Catherine Croft and Clare Price respectively, the work gets properly underway with an essay by Elain Harwood on ‘Church Building in Western Europe 1922-1975’, oddly isolated from the other essays in the book which appear towards the end.

The core of the volume is the 100 entries on individual buildings, which actually cover 101 churches, one being shared by two adjacent churches in Plymouth. Here is where it becomes apparent that the coverage is skewed, once the included buildings are tabulated by denomination, year, and geographical location. Tabulation by the reader is necessary because there is no list of the churches included in the entries anywhere in the book, and they are not distinguished in the index from those mentioned in the essays that top and tail them. The Church of England is perhaps inevitably the denomination with the most churches, 42 of the 100 entries. This might seem fair coverage for the established church. However, the 36 entries for Roman Catholic churches is surely disproportionate. The denominations with the next most entries are Church of Scotland (five) and ‘Inter-denominational’ (four). One Methodist, one entry shared Baptist/



*Catherine Street Baptist Church, Plymouth by the Louis de Soissons Partnership of 1957 is included in 100 Churches 100 Years. This interior view shows well the restrained neo-Georgian style leading the eye to the impressive mural by Hans Feibusch in the chancel (photograph by stevecadman on Flickr)*

Unitarian, one other Baptist, one other Unitarian, one URC, one Christian Scientist – no Quakers, no Mormons. There is also a geographical bias, with 29 of the entries being for (greater) London, more than for the whole of northern England. And a chronological one: 27 of the entries are for the ten years of the 1960s. The criteria for selection are not stated, nor who made the selection. That ‘church’ means a building devoted to Christian worship is implicit throughout but not actually spelled out. The Introduction refers to a ‘fair spread of representative buildings’ but given the analysis above, representative of what?

The entries themselves consist for the most part of single pages, with one or two photographs and a short description. Their style is a little uneven as a consequence of 40 different authors contributing (though over half of the entries are by seven writers) but that adds variety and each entry is presumably intended to be read on its own rather than as part of an integrated text. Five entries for cathedrals, two of them Roman Catholic, are extended with longer descriptions and more photographs, but are otherwise similar to the majority.

Three more short thematic essays follow. ‘Places of Worship in a Changing Faith Landscape’ by Kate Jordan offers some comments on non-Christian buildings, primarily Jewish and Muslim but with some mention of other faiths. This piece could surely have been longer and more wide-reaching. Jane Brocket discusses ‘Stained Glass’ and ‘Art & Artefacts’ are covered by Alan Powers.

Before the book concludes with a short and slightly peculiar glossary and the usual further reading, acknowledgements, and so on, there is a set of Practice Profiles. There are nine, though as there is no list of them, and no running heads, establishing this number, let alone who gets an essay, is left for the reader to work out for themselves. Each practice gets a page of potted history, and some more photographs of churches. Possibly an opportunity to picture the architects has been missed here. It probably will not come as a surprise that this section is again dominated by Anglican and Roman Catholic buildings only slightly leavened with a small number of college chapels.

Final impressions of the book concern what is missing rather than what is included. The absence of full tables of contents for the 100 individual church entries and the practice profiles make it inconvenient for reference. The episodic nature of the volume suggest it is not intended for reading through but for dipping into and enjoying the photographs, perhaps? For this, it is a very nice piece of work, if your interests are Anglican or Roman Catholic churches, if a little pricey. It is probably not, however, what most members of the Chapels Society will be looking for.

*Stuart Leadley*

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