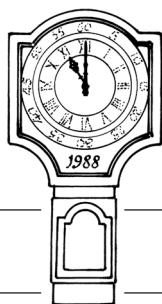


# THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

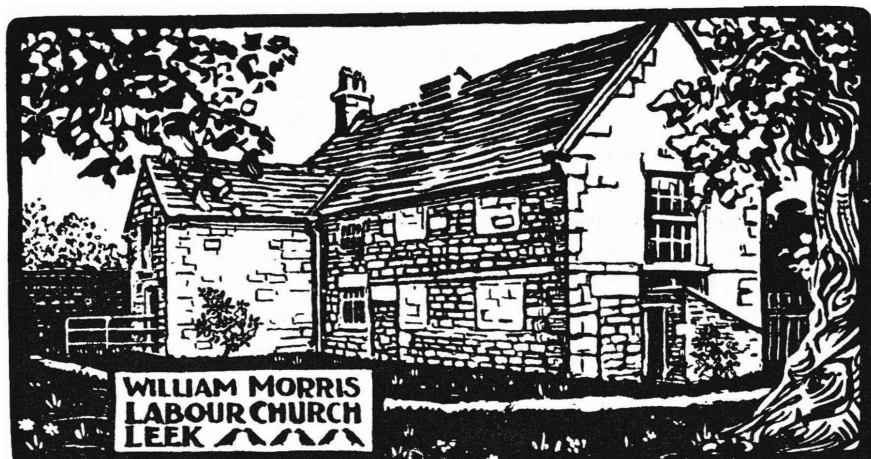


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*A print of Leek Friends Meeting House c1901 when the premises were occupied  
by a Labour Church [see article on page 10]*

# ADDRESS BOOK

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# NOTICEBOARD

## CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

Saturday 26 September    Visit to Altrincham (Roger Holden)

# EDITORIAL

The past few months have been a testing time for all of us, not least this Society. Details of our response are on the next page of this *Newsletter*. The postponement/cancellation of the AGM has meant that periods of appointment have had to be carried forward for another year and therefore I continue as the Hon Editor for the time being. I have certainly found that the lockdown has given me more opportunity to write [see later in this issue] and I hope you have had similar opportunities – I look forward to publishing anything of interest you might care to offer me!

I sincerely hope that despite the exigencies of the lockdown regime you have all kept safe and well and I look forward to being able in the future to greet you in person!

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

# PROCEEDINGS

## COVID19 AND THE CHAPELS SOCIETY

At their meeting on Tuesday 19 May the Council, recognizing that restrictions due to the Covid19 epidemic are continuing for the foreseeable future, made the following decisions:

- to postpone the 2020 AGM until a date in the future and to continue all appointments due to terminate at the AGM to continue until the AGM is held.

Nevertheless you will find included with this issue of the *Newsletter*, the Annual Report and Accounts for 2019. Please let the Hon Secretary or the Hon Treasurer know if you have any queries about matters contained therein.

- to go ahead with the advertising of our Autumn visit to Altrincham and Sale, in the hope that things may change before the end of September.  
We hope that some members will want to take part if possible. Should it become necessary later to cancel this visit, no money will be retained and all cheques will be destroyed.
- to carry forward to 2021 any cancelled visits.  
We will let you have projected dates for 2021 visits in a later issue of the *Newsletter*.

We are sure that members will understand that under the circumstances these decisions are inevitable. We all look forward to proceeding with a more normal programme of activities in 2021, which we hope will contain an autumn conference jointly with the Family and Community History Research Society (FACHRS), celebrating the ending of the Communities of Dissent project which was described in *Newsletter* 64 [January 2017].

## REMAINDERED BOOKS

In preparation for the transfer of the responsibilities from the Hon Editor to his successor, it has been decided to decrease our stocks of Chapels Society publications by offering them to our members at give-away prices.

Members can purchase one copy of any of the following books for only £3 per volume to cover postage and packing:

Dissent and the Gothic Revival (2007)

Nonconformist Communion Plate & Other Vessels (2008)

Chapels & Chapel People (2010)

Sitting in Chapel [*Journal* Vol 1, 2013]  
Building the Church [*Journal* Vol 2, 2016]  
All chapels great and small [*Journal* Vol 3, 2018]

Further details of how to obtain the books and an order form will be found on the website at [www.chapelsociety.org.uk/publications/](http://www.chapelsociety.org.uk/publications/) or by e-mailing the Hon Editor.

## TONY CROSS (1932-2019)

*Further to the short obituary which appeared in our last issue, member Rosemary Arthur offers this personal appreciation.*

I first met Tony Cross when he was appointed Minister at Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, Hampstead, where I had been worshipping since 1974. I had recently had my second child. Tony was unfailingly supportive, encouraging me to bring the baby to chapel, breastfeeding my son when necessary; quite unusual at that time, I may say.

Tony was erudite, cultured and sophisticated, but never patronising, and made friends easily. He initiated bible studies at the Manse, each preceded by a 'pot-luck' supper. We were each expected to bring a different translation of the Bible. If necessary, we helped ourselves from his bookshelf. On one occasion, I found myself having to use his Latin bible, as the others had all been taken! This was good practice for my later training as a theologian. Tony was, in fact, the single most important influence in my academic life, encouraging me to read the Bible critically, rather than to simply follow, and expand on, traditional Christian doctrine.

It was during this period at Rosslyn Hill that he started the Fellowship of Liberal Christians, which was intended to include, not just Unitarians, but those of other denominations also. Tony described himself as both a Christian and a Unitarian. He was suspicious of labels and was comfortable with crossing denominational boundaries.

In 1985 he was appointed Principal of Manchester College, Oxford (later to become Harris Manchester College). When I visited him there, he offered me a place, should I wish to study there. I owe an enormous debt to Tony for his unfailing support and encouragement throughout the rest of his life, not least in my spiritual development.

While still within the Unitarian denomination, Tony described himself as 'a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ'. He said: 'I know that I am not the only Unitarian and Free Christian who believes in the resurrection of Jesus, who believes that in and through the man Jesus, God reveals himself to us as One who loves, heals, reconciles, liberates, lives among us, suffers with us and

triumphs with us over the power of death and disintegration.’ He believed that ‘we continue to mature after death, ...’ and that we are never separated from our loved and honoured dead.

Tony was much impressed by James Martineau and, like him, felt that, if one were in a situation where one’s conscience forced one to choose between belief in God and the Pope, on the one hand, or no God and no Pope, on the other, then ‘I would choose, not no God and no Pope, but Pope - even Pope – and God’. This is the path that Tony himself took and, after a major heart attack while minister at Mansford Street, Bethnal Green, and subsequent retirement to Oxford in 1992, he converted to Roman Catholicism.

In May 2016 he met Wai Min Sun (known as Mun), a gay man from a Chinese Malaysian Buddhist family. It was more or less love at first sight and they married in October 2017. Sadly, the Roman Catholic Church where they worshipped in Oxford took exception to their ‘irregular union’ (as they saw it), and made it clear that Tony was no longer welcome to take part in the Mass. A local Anglo-Catholic church did, however welcome them, and Tony was able to take a full part in reading the Lesson and leading intercessions at the Eucharist.

During these last few years of his life, Mun nursed him devotedly. Tony wrote in one of his last letters, ‘I hope one day all the churches will recognize that faithful, committed relationships are true forms of marriage and deserve to be blessed.’

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

### New Members

We are pleased to be able to welcome three new members to the Society since the last *Newsletter*. Randolph Skomer Quinault of London, Matthew Davis of Hove, who has many wide-ranging interests in the world of chapels, and David Kennett, of Warwickshire, who is researching chapel buildings in South Warwickshire.

### News of deaths

We also have to report the sad loss of two members. News of the death of Life Member John Akroyd of Southport was received in November 2019, and that of the death of Ossie Ross of Thame was received in January 2020. Mr Akroyd was a member of this Society for more than thirty years; his name is among those on the earliest lists of members we hold.

*Stuart Leadley*

# THE MEETING ROOM, BANK STREET, MALVERN, WORCS.

AN ARTICLE BY J. EDWARD C. PETERS



*The meeting house (on the left)  
from Lygon Bank [photograph  
copyright the author]*

The Brethren Meeting Room in Bank Street, Malvern, had been set up by the Exclusive Brethren. It is to the north of the town centre, and a little east of Worcester Road; it stands to the rear of Roselle House.

There had been an earlier, short-lived meeting in the town, connected with one at Hereford. This had been set up in 1837, and sent preachers out in various directions, including, in 1839, to Colwall, a little to the west of Malvern. This work was moved to Malvern two years later. A mission room was hired there in 1842, but this seems to have been too optimistic, being given up the following year, a room then being rented for services. In time, sending preachers to Malvern became sporadic, and ceased in 1849. Someone from Malvern, however, was buried

in the Brethren burial ground at Hereford in 1851. No Brethren meeting in Malvern was registered in the Religious Census of that year. Whilst the Brethren had split into Open and Exclusive branches in 1848, this division does not appear to have affected Hereford until 1850.

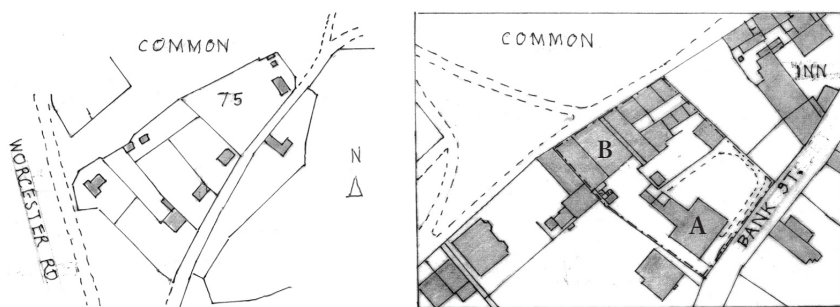
The Brethren had reappeared in Malvern by late 1866, there being then two meetings, one Open and one Exclusive: when they actually began is not recorded. Both were included in the times of services at places of worship in Malvern published by the local newspaper from December, 1866: both were noted simply as 'Brethren'. The paper had occasionally noted times of services in 1863, but did not then mention Brethren meetings: they were not noted in Dr Grindrod's local guide book two years later, although other Nonconformists were included. Both meetings began to meet in private houses and were, at least in part, to serve visitors to the town, then developing as a spa. The Wesleyan Methodist chapel was built partly for this reason in 1865.

The Exclusive meeting was probably formed by George Preen, it being in his house, which he had built in 1850. In early 1869 the meeting moved to self-contained premises at the 'Back of Roselle House', that is the present room. The Open Brethren moved at the same time to The Bedford Room in Worcester Road. Preen was noted as the local contact in later lists of meetings, and may

have been of more than local significance in Exclusive circles, being invited to their conference in Ryde in the Isle of Wight in 1873, although Malvern was well outside the area where each meeting was included. J.N. Darby is said to have spoken in Malvern in the late 1870s, as at some time did G.V. Wigram. By 1877 Preen was living elsewhere in north Malvern, but retained ownership of the property, although the business was being run by others. He had paid off the mortgage on his property in 1879, but took out a new one in 1894 from Miss Drew of Quemerford in Wiltshire, where there was a Brethren meeting. This seems, as will be noted, to have been used for improvements in the meeting room. Interestingly the Open Brethren moved to better premises in Cowleigh Road in the same year. The coincidence of dates here and in 1869 suggests some competition between the two meetings.

A local development which will have encouraged the meeting was the setting up of a Brethren girls boarding school in 1898 by the Misses Flint at Clarendon, not far off in Cowleigh Road. The girls went twice on Sundays to services at Bank Street. The number of pupils fluctuated somewhat, but grew under Miss Swain after 1930. Under her pupils could alternatively go to the Open Brethren meeting or to Holy Trinity Anglican Church. The school moved in 1948 to north Wales. The Bank Street meeting was unusual in retaining a Sunday school into the 1930s, as they had largely ceased in Exclusive Brethren meetings after 1908, with the Glanton division. Malvern joined a breakaway group in the Brethren division in 1970, which group further subdivided in 1972. The Bank Street meeting is still functioning.

The site slopes down to the east. Its history can be traced from 1810 when a small field was recorded, bounded on one side by what was to become Bank Street, on two others by the common. This field was sold to Thomas Berry in 1837, who built what is now The Nag's Head Inn towards its east end. In 1845 he sold the western part of the field to George Preen who built on it Roselle House,



*The area surrounding the meeting house from the 1841 tithe map (on the left: 75 indicates Berry's land) and from the 1885 50-inch OS map (on the right:*

*Preen's land is surrounded by a dotted-dashed line; A Roselle House; B meeting house; the track alongside the common became Lygon Bank)*

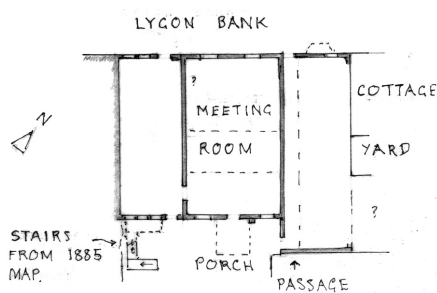
probably in 1850. This is a substantial hipped-roofed brick building of three floors and a part cellar near to the Bank Street frontage. He was first recorded as living in Roselle House in the 1851 census and the 1852 rate book. He had taken out a mortgage, presumably to build the house. In 1855 he appeared in the local directory as an upholsterer and lodging-house keeper; he was still providing accommodation for visitors in 1866. The size of the house suggests that it had been built with this in mind. He had added furniture broking and cabinet making to his activities by 1868. These activities would account for the need for the premises built against the north boundary of the site. The first part had probably been built by 1863, the rates having gone up between 1860 and that year. At some stage ‘G. Preen’ and what were presumably details of the business had been painted on the west wall of the house, over the way through to the yard, but only his name was still legible in 2012.

Preen died in 1904, his executors selling the property the following year. The workshops, meeting room, adjoining house and cottages formed one lot, with yard and carriage access from Bank Street; the main house and garden formed a second, with right of access over the carriageway. The first lot was bought by E.M. Lear, who appears to have been a member of the Brethren. The furniture business continued until about 1922, commercial use of a sort rather longer. The eastern parts of the property were at some stage sold off, leaving the meeting room and ancillary accommodation, now owned by trustees.

Turning to the buildings, the earliest is a two-storey brick workshop, built against the north boundary, its gable facing the house and yard. It had a central doorway on each floor, the upper one with a semi-circular head, presumably for taking in furniture. The windows were sashed, and had flat brick arches with projecting hoodmoulds; it thus presented a good front to the customer. The north side, with no entrance, was plainer. There were two openings on the west side to the upper floor now blocked, with the head to a third, just above floor level, the significance of which is not clear. The original access to the upper floor



*The meeting house and associated buildings – entrance front (from the south)  
[photograph copyright the author]*



*Plan of the meeting house and associated buildings as shown on the left*

may have been by external steps to one of the blocked openings; no evidence was seen for internal stairs.

The two-storey leanto extension on the west extended to the site boundary, probably built to make up space lost when the ground floor of the original building became the meeting room. Access to its upper floor was by a complicated external flight of steps, replaced by an internal staircase in the late 20th / early 21st century. There were further steps internally to reach the upper floor of the original building. How the interior of the extension was originally planned is not known. It was possibly in 1894 that it was altered to provide ancillary accommodation for the meeting room, or perhaps rather later. The south gable has probably been rebuilt, being in pale, pressed bricks, unlike any other walls on site.

As noted, Preen took out a further mortgage in 1894, the schedule referring to 'a room for religious purposes', implying the ground floor of the original building only. The money seems to have been used to improve this. The porch, with a boiler house below, was added: it does not appear on the 1885 50-inch Ordnance Survey map, but does on the 1904 25-inch. It will have provided not only a better entrance, but improved hot water central heating. It is not apparent how the room was previously heated. This was probably when ventilation was improved, with air inlets by or under the windows, connected to Tobin tubes, an extract duct on the upper floor, rising from a central grille in the ceiling to a cowl on the ridge, rather obstructing the use of the upper floor. A large part of the duct survives. Was it to extract fumes from gas lighting? The porch will have prevented the gable door above being used to take in furniture, so this was probably when the upper door on the north gable of the leanto was inserted. By 1904 Lygon Bank was wide enough to take a cart, but had only been a footpath twenty years before. The porch has been rebuilt twice, the second time in 2011.

The buildings to the east of the original workshop had all been erected by Preen. The first is a three-story house (now flats), which incorporated a passage from Lygon Bank to the courtyard. It is of brick (now rendered), with a decorative verge detail to the gable, and a decorative string course over the door to the passage from the courtyard. An early 20th century photograph shows lettering reading 'Furniture Warehouse' on the ridge, to be read from the road to the east (the house and its roof hid the original workshop from this side.) Beyond, shown in a 1905 photograph, were three three-storey cottages, stepping down with the slope. They had been demolished by 1965, and the site has since been developed.

*The writer is indebted to Dr D. Guy of Roselle House for access to its deeds, and to members of the meeting for information and access to the room. The early minute and account books for the Hereford Meeting were consulted at the Hereford Record Office, the Malvern Advertiser on microfilm, for 1860s (1864 and '65 missing) and local directories at Malvern Public Library, also A Clarendon Story by P.M. St. John.*

# THE DECIPHERING OF LEEK FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

AN ARTICLE BY CHRIS SKIDMORE

The northern part of Staffordshire, bordering on Derbyshire and Cheshire is an area of hills, moors and heaths, known as the Staffordshire Moorlands. This area, which centres on Leek, was fertile ground for dissent in the seventeenth century: George Fox visited the area at least four times, first in 1651/2, and he was followed by at least ten other itinerant Quaker preachers in the following years. At first Friends worshipped in each other's houses, as was common, and at least six of these 'conventicles' in the Moorlands area were identified in returns to Archbishop Sheldon in 1669, one reportedly having 100 attenders.

Monthly Meetings were settled in Staffordshire in 1668, at Leek in the north and Stafford in the south. Following the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689 six of the 17 houses registered as Quaker Meeting Houses in Staffordshire were in the Moorlands area. However no purpose-built meeting house was registered until that in Leek in 1695. This was built on land known as Tranter's Croft on Overton Bank, close to the centre of the town and only 200m or so west of the parish church of St Edward. This land was bought for £37 10s. from Christian, Joyever and Charity, the three daughters and heiresses of Gervase Gent (d.1690), a member of a successful Quaker family in the town. Six cottages were built alongside the meeting house and included in the trust which governed the property: their rents were to be used for the relief of the poor.



*The mystery of Leek Meeting House – the northern wall and the north-west corner showing blocked windows and doors in the seventeenth-century stonework  
[photograph copyright Faith Cleverdon]*

The meeting house was built on a rectangular plan and is of two storeys with a plain tiled roof. Remarkably for seventeenth-century buildings in Leek, it is built of stone, which was only just supplanting wood at this period, but the stone is not local and has been imported from elsewhere. This, together with its prominent position and apparent domestic appearance, tends to suggest that it was intended to be read as a high-status building. It sits in the south-eastern corner of the plot with the burial ground, devoid of any gravestones, to the north and west, surrounded by a 2m high wall, at least part of which is original. The meeting house and its wall are separately listed at Grade II.

The meeting house has had a chequered career. The eighteenth century saw two incursions associated with Jacobite unrest. In 1715 anti-Jacobite crowds removed the furniture and burnt it while inflicting similar damage on the Presbyterian meeting house. On 3 December 1745 the Jacobite army stayed overnight in Leek before advancing on Derby, the town was garrisoned until the 8th and the meeting house was requisitioned and used as a stable. Between 1750 and 1780 the meeting house was used as a school.

Improvements were also made, a stable being added and in 1770 a 'house of ease'. In 1794 major rebuilding led to the meeting house being extended to the east and a wing added at the front of the extension to create an L-shaped plan. However the early nineteenth century saw a decline in membership and the meeting house was closed, opening again sporadically during the century and then closing again from 1895.

At this point it was taken over by the William Morris Labour Church, which opened in December 1896. They were responsible for numerous 'unQuakerly' decorative changes, which are described by an article in *The Reformers Yearbook* for 1901:

Internally it has a quaint old gallery, and good old high-back pews - none of the vulgar modern Bethel pitch-pine benches. The seats and other woodwork are painted apple-green, with blue felt mats, and the walls are stencilled on a rich red lacquer ground with designs by Walter Crane and Larnier Sugden. The speaker's desk has a richly embroidered silk book-cloth, designed by George Rigby and Donald Larnier, and executed by a member of the Leek Embroidery Society: it bears in 'Kelmescott' lettering the church's name. The church's banner stands adjacent, beautifully painted on blue silk velvet by Stephen Webb (a founder of the Arts and Crafts Society, and associated with Morris at South Kensington). It bears the church's monogram, and the legend, 'Every Heart contains Perfection's Germ' (Shelley).

The association of the Labour Church at Leek with William Morris (who had died on 3 October 1896) is unique and may have been linked to his visits to the town's dye works in 1875-77 when reviving the use of vegetable dyestuffs. However of the art inspired in his honour there is little that now remains – a dark



*The 1794 northern extension to the meeting house showing the exterior  
(on the left) and the hallway and stairs (on the right)  
[photographs copyright the author]*

brown patch with indistinct markings on is all that is visible of the murals which were largely painted over when the building returned to Friends in the 1930s.

Entering on the north side from Overton Bank you are presented first with the gable end of the eastern extension to the meeting house, built in 1794, with its large central 16-pane sash window above the off-centre entrance with double doors. To your left in the gable end of the row of cottages next to the meeting house, presumably rebuilt since 1695 since there are now only four of them, is a blocked up doorway, indicating perhaps that the end cottage belonged at one time to the chapel keeper or resident Friend.

The entrance doors lead into a long full-height hallway, paved with stone and with on the left a single flight of stone stairs leading to the upper floor which presumably contained the women's meeting room. The hallway is neatly boarded to dado height as are the stairs, which have a matching panelled banister. Proceeding down the hallway one has to turn to the right to enter the main meeting room which has the gallery projecting over it at this eastern end. Under the gallery are a modern kitchen and serving hatch. Above can be seen the panelled front of the gallery with what may have been removeable shutters above. At the western end of the room, below the large western window is the panelled back of what was an impressive ministers' stand, raised up three steps from the ground. This arrangement of the meeting room is what remains of the 1794 layout after the nineteenth-century changes. We have little knowledge of the internal arrangements of the 1695 meeting house except that a 1708 minute refers to a gallery.

Deciphering the structure of the 1695 meeting house is not straightforward. From the outside, the construction of the north, west and south walls looks all of a piece - roughly coursed and squared stone with a string course running above the downstairs windows and doors. On the north wall there are three windows at each level, the first and second on the ground floor separated by a seventeenth-century doorway. This doorway is now blocked as are all the windows on this side except the easternmost. These contain wooden sashes, 12-pane below and 8-pane above which appear contemporary with those in the 1794 extension. These openings have large stone lintels above and stone cills beneath, lacking in the other blocked-up openings, which may indicate that the original windows, which lack single lintels, were mullioned. This supposition is supported by a view



*The western gable end showing the blocked doorway and mullioned window [photograph copyright the author]*

of the western gable end, now dominated by the central 16-pane sash window set at the same level as the equivalent window in the entrance gable. Below this is a blocked seventeenth-century window which retains its two mullions. Alongside this and to the north is another doorway, again blocked, but so similar in construction to that in the north wall that it is almost certainly contemporary with it.

The south side of the building is close to the southern arm of the wall which surrounds the original property. It repeats the fenestration of the north wall, having three windows at both upper and lower levels, however the windows are wider, the lower having 18-pane sashes and the upper 12-pane sashes. The positions of these windows also do not match those of the north wall. The four close together at the far eastern end, two above and two below, are almost certainly part of the 1794 extension. The pair near the western gable now light the main meeting room.

The simplest interpretation is that the 1695 building had two entrances, one each on the north and west walls which were both blocked in 1794 and superseded by the current entrance in the northern extension. It is also fair to assume that there were windows at two levels perhaps in all four walls, the numbers unknown. Assuming that the material in the north wall is all original work, and the existence of the string course all the way across the north wall certainly suggests this, the minimum position would be to assume that the meeting house was lengthened by the extent of the forward-facing entrance block and that the north wall originally had six windows, some of which were blocked in 1794.

If this north wall does represent the original design, it has to be said that it is a relatively unusual one for a Quaker meeting house of the period. The vast majority of surviving early meeting houses are single-storey structures: those that are two-storey buildings with a gallery tend only to have upper windows to light the gallery, having full-height windows lighting the meeting room, as at Brigflatts and Colthouse. Two-storey meeting houses which have the appearance of domestic buildings, like this one, do survive at Hertford and Ifield but this is the only one I know of this design. The existence of a door in the long side and in the gable end only adds to the peculiarity.

The existence of the two doors draws into question the arrangement of the interior. The door to a meeting house usually gives onto a lobby with the gallery above, the ministers' stand being at the opposite end of the building. With a door and window in the west gable, the minister's stand could not have easily been at that end, as it is now. This suggests that it was either against the eastern gable wall or on one of the long walls. When the stand is on a long wall it is most usual to have the door opposite it in the centre of the other long wall. There is only one meeting house that I can think of where the stand is on the same wall as the door, and that is Brigflatts.

It has been suggested to me that the west gable entrance is a supernumerary one for convenient exit to the graveyard. However what evidence there is about Quaker burial practice in the first fifty years suggests strongly that the meeting for worship and the committal (if there was anything so formal) took place outside around the grave, obviating the need to move from the meeting house to the burial ground.

Where there is a door in the gable end, as at Jordans, it is there because that part of the meeting house was used as a dwelling and thus required a separate entrance. There are numerous references to parts of early meeting houses being used as dwellings, often for widows or for indigent Friends so this would not have been unusual. My suggestion would be that initially the west end of the meeting house was divided into two floors the upper one of which might have been the gallery and/or part of a dwelling. The stand could then have been on the south wall, accounting for the absence of windows in the middle of that side.

It is always tempting to overspeculate when one is presented with a mystery of the sort presented by the meeting house at Leek but I think the above makes for at least an interesting story!

*The author has used as his main sources the report on the meeting house which is part of the Quaker Meeting Houses Heritage Project [[heritage.quaker.org.uk/files/Leek\\_LM.pdf](http://heritage.quaker.org.uk/files/Leek_LM.pdf)] and Dennis Stuart's unpublished thesis The early Quaker movement in Staffordshire, 1651-1743 : from open fellowship to closed sect [[ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.697041](http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.697041)]. He acknowledges the help of Faith Cleverdon who enabled him to decipher certain aspects of the building.*

## NEWS AND NOTES

### Walpole Old Meeting does have electricity!

Following the account of the visit to Norfolk and the Waveney Valley in the last issue, we received the following from Christina van Melzen:

Having just read the latest Chapels Society *Newsletter* I have to point out that Roger Holden is mistaken in stating that there is no electricity in the Old Chapel at Walpole. The Historic Chapels Trust installed it in the major work when they first acquired the building. There is lighting in the vestry and on the stairs, everywhere else are enough points to allow lighting to be brought into the building for any events. There is of course electricity in the small building which serves as domestic premises at the end of the graveyard.

The reasoning was simply that it would be impossible to find anything which would not spoil the authentic atmosphere of the simple building. The lights and even the small switches in the vestry came from a supply provided by Anthony Rossi, the trust's architect, who over many years had acquired such small items and reused them to good effect where appropriate.

We are happy to take this opportunity to put the record straight and offer our apologies to friends at the Old Chapel.

### Launch of London Historic Buildings Trust



Jenny Freeman writes to report on the January launch of the London Historic Buildings Trust [[www.londonhistoricbuildings.org.uk](http://www.londonhistoricbuildings.org.uk)], formerly known as the Heritage of London Trust Operations Ltd (HOLTOP). Their aims are to operate in a similar way to any developer, although their objective is conservation and community benefit, rather than profit. Among the chapels with which the Trust is involved are the Cemetery Chapels at the South Ealing Cemetery and St George's Garrison Church, Woolwich.

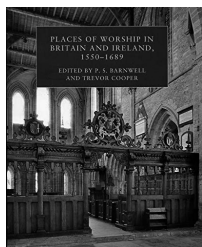
The launch on 21 January was held at the grade II-listed Tin Tabernacle in Cambridge Avenue, Kilburn, the north London home of the sea scouts, seen here in Jenny's picture. Apart from being itself a rare survival it is made more remarkable in that its interior was built by local sailors for the Sea Scouts to contain a mock-up of a battleship with decks, portholes, bridge and even a Bofors gun!

## Death of John Booth

Those of us who enjoyed the visit to Stoke-on-Trent for last year's AGM, will remember the warm welcome given to us at Bethesda in Hanley by the chair of the Friends, John Booth, who died on 22 February. John had been associated with the chapel for much of his life and had been involved with the Friends since their inception – to most local people he was 'Mr Bethesda'. We send our commiserations to members involved with Bethesda, for the loss of a valued colleague. An obituary can be found in the latest issue of The Historic Chapels Trust Newsletter.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Places of Worship in Britain and Ireland, 1550-1689* edited by P.S. Barnwell and Trevor Cooper. Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2019. vi+234 pages, hardback. ISBN 978-1-907730-80-1. £45



From a first glance at the contents page of this, the fifth volume in a series on places of worship in Britain and Ireland, it might seem that only a couple of the essays would be of immediate interest to members of the Chapels Society. A little reflection, however, suggests that there is more here than the pieces by Christopher Wakeling on Nonconformists and Sharman Kadish on synagogues. This was of course the age that give rise to the very notion of a dissent existing apart from 'the church', and this is period in which the origins of a distinctive 'chapel' style emerge.

Trevor Cooper contributes the longest chapter in the book, on the 'Interior Planning of the English Parish Church, 1559-c1640'. For those whose paradigm for the typical Anglican parish church is the result of Victorian rebuilding and reordering, and includes bench seating and deep chancels, Cooper's descriptions of seating plans and the evolution and prominence of pulpits might be disconcerting. These things seem somehow more 'chapel'. Perhaps the dissenters of the eighteenth and nineteenth century did not leave the church; perhaps it left them?

The first chapter to which members of the Chapels Society will probably turn is that by our former president, Christopher Wakeling. There is, as he admits, some overlap with the first chapter of *Chapels of England*, but this is by no means a duplication. This is where the inheritance of Old Dissent from the seventeenth century parish church as described by Cooper combines with the power of necessity to form a new chapel architecture. The requirements for the liturgy of the Word – pulpit, seating, light – were the same outside the Church as within; it was lack of resources and a hope that exclusion would be temporary

that led to simpler forms in the chapel. It was not until the end of the century that the hope of reconciliation and re-incorporation was gone and toleration meant that Nonconformists started to erect purpose-built and permanent places of worship of their own.

Sharman Kadish contributes a short chapter on synagogues, largely centred on Bevis Marks in London, compared and contrasted with the Amsterdam synagogues which were its progenitors.

This is definitely a book about the British Isles rather than England. There are separate essays on Scotland, by Richard Oram, and on Ireland – though only covering the Established Church – by William Roulston. Scotland's case was different from that of England, no separate 'Nonconformity' emerging in this period, but instead the victory of Presbyterianism. There were changes, and buildings were adapted and reused, but within the context of the Kirk rather than outside of it. As Roulston explains, his study is limited by the availability of evidence, both physical and documentary, which is a shame, because so much of interest has been lost and so is not amenable to study.

Other essays included are by John Harper on liturgy and music, by Ian Atherton on cathedrals, and a case study on All Hallows the Great, Thames Street, by Anthony Geraghty and Mark Kirby. The book is topped and tailed by overview pieces by Kenneth Fincham and P.S. Barnwell.

This is collection of essays by different hands, not an integrated and comprehensive history, so inevitably there is some unevenness of tone and style. However, there is clearly cross-fertilisation and some collaboration, as references within the papers and the various authors' acknowledgements make clear.

There are a few other topics which might have been included – the private and secret places of worship of Roman Catholics in England, and their more public churches in Ireland; private chapels of all sorts; institutional chapels, such as those of university colleges – but there is never enough space or willing authors to cover all possible ground. Also lacking are any notes about the contributors beyond their academic affiliations listed on the table of contents; not essential but would have been useful.

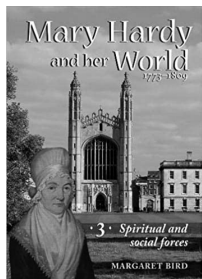
Further volumes in the series are planned, four in all, to bring the story up to the present day. These are advertised as covering progressively shorter time spans, so there should be plenty of room for more material of interest to members of this Society.

Physically, this is a very nicely produced book indeed, up to the usual standards of Shaun Tyas. It is printed on high quality paper, illustrated in colour throughout (some of the pictures seem a bit 'washed out' but that may be due to the originals rather than the printing), and properly bound in cloth-covered boards. The notes are conveniently placed at the bottom of pages where they can be consulted rather than hidden away at the end of the volume. If there are any typographical errors, your reviewer did not notice them. Unfortunately there is

an inevitable and literal price to pay – in this case £45 for fewer than 250 pages and this may deter potential but wavering purchasers.

Stuart Leadley

*Mary Hardy and her World 1773-1809: 3 Spiritual and social forces* by Margaret Bird. Kingston upon Thames: Burnham Press, 2020. 888 pages, hardback. ISBN 978-1-9162067-3-1 £38.00 + £2.80 p&p.<sup>1</sup>



Much new light is thrown on Old and New Dissent in North Norfolk by Margaret Bird in this, the third of the four companion studies to her edition of the diary of Mary Hardy. These throw much light on Mary Hardy's economic, social, political and religious context, and on provincial life in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Mary Hardy, the wife of a farmer and brewer in Letheringsett in north Norfolk was grandmother of William Hardy Cozens-Hardy, a leader of the Wesleyan Reform Movement. Mary Hardy became disillusioned with her parish church in the 1790s, and her diary shows her attending Wesleyan meetings over a wide area of North Norfolk.

Margaret Bird's research about the meetings Mary attended in the 1790s and 1800s reveals a great deal about rural dissent in this prosperous agricultural and mercantile society in the hinterland of the small ports of Cley, Blakeney and Wells-next-the-Sea. A picture has emerged of extensive itinerancy by Anglican evangelicals, Independents, and Calvinistic Methodists, as well as Wesleyans.

It seems that visiting evangelical curates and clergy temporarily occupying parish church pulpits, contributed recruits for Independent, Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodist meetings. The extent of these meetings was considerable. The Independent minister at Guestwick from 1776 to 1824, John Sykes, had meetings in three nearby villages, with clergy in seven neighbouring villages noting their parishioners attended his meetings.<sup>2</sup>

When in 1788 the Guestwick Independents united with the Briston Calvinistic Methodists the sixty-five members (twenty-five men and thirty-eight women) were drawn from twenty-two parishes, stretching sixteen miles from north to south. Additionally there were many 'attenders' as well. The incumbent of Briston commented the meeting house congregation of a hundred or so, were mostly 'tradesmen and the labouring poor'. This suggests people travelled as far to hear a preacher or attend a meeting, as to market.

There was also a significant Calvinistic Methodist presence in the area. Thomas Mendham, a schoolmaster, moneylender, scrivener and attorney, was the Calvinistic Methodist preacher at Briston where Elizabeth Grieves (nee Franklin) built a meeting house where 'any minister should belong to the Methodist Connexion of the Countess of Huntingdon', in which she and Mendham preached. However, their attorney failed to enrol the trust in the

Court of Chancery within six months of establishing it. When in 1783 Mr and Mrs Grieves invited the Independent Thomas Sykes to preach, he agreed, if they would hand it over to him, which they did. Mendham challenged this, but the trust was declared void, not having been enrolled. Mrs Grieves and her husband joined the Independents as preachers. Mendham, who had a circuit of meetings over about a twenty-five mile range, immediately built a new Calvinistic Methodist meeting house and manse, on the opposite side of the road, where two years after his death in 1793 the congregation joined the Wesleyan connexion. Elizabeth Grieve's sister, Mary Parker, had built a Calvinistic Methodist meeting house in Fakenham in 1773, and enrolled it in Chancery in 1779, with eight trustees, including four women. However, c1795 that congregation too joined the Wesleyan connection.<sup>3</sup> There appear to have been five or six other Anglican women Calvinistic preachers in the area.

The first Wesleyan circuit in north Norfolk was instituted in Wells-next-the-Sea in 1791, being renamed the Walsingham circuit in 1793. Although Mendham's attempts to preach in Holt in 1785 had caused a riot, a Wesleyan meeting was registered there in 1793 in the house of John Mason, a tailor. A Wesleyan meeting house was built at Walsingham in 1794, for which Margaret Bird has provided the details of the building. The members bought 'A book of architecture' for 16 shillings, and paid a local preacher, William Tilney, who was a carpenter and previously a Calvinistic Methodist preacher, £215 for his work, and Mrs Lack (or Lake) £115 for bricklayers work and building materials, and bought 'white cornice bricks' from Mr Coke of Holkham. Women were among the contributors to the costs, notably Miss Ann Ramm who loaned £100, nearly a seventh of the costs of the building.<sup>4</sup> The Cley society was led by Elizabeth Smith, an attorney's wife, who registered a meeting under the Toleration Act in her house in 1792, and helped to build the meeting house there in 1799. After her death it was bought and vested in trustees by the Connexion.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the Briston meeting house there were meeting houses at Brinton, which was hired, rent free, at Wells (1808), Blakeney (1812), Titchwell (1812, one of Mendham's former preaching stations) and Holt (1813).

Women were significant in this development of dissent in North Norfolk. Thomas Mendham, in addition to Mary Parker's meeting house at Fakenham and Elizabeth Grieve's meeting house in Briston, preached in Elizabeth Parker's house at Hunworth, a chapel owned by Mary Parker at Barney, and a chapel owned by the Misses Ann and Martha Glover in South Creak. Mary Proudfoot, wife of a Wells limeburner, was a frequent Wesleyan preacher. Membership lists show the extent to which at society level rural Wesleyanism was a woman's movement. At Cley in 1798 eleven of fifteen members were women, at Brinton eight out of ten were women, at Wells thirteen of the twenty-three were women, fourteen of the twenty-nine at Walsingham were women. At Wells in 1811 only twenty-four of the seventy-one members were men.

Mary Hardy began occasionally attending Wesleyan meetings in 1795, and her diary shows the willingness of women to travel significant distances to meetings, bumping along rutted roads in a pony trap with her friends and maids and a driver. As she became more involved sometimes, although in her sixties, she might make a round trip of seventeen miles on a Sunday, to the Cley meeting in the morning and the Briston meeting in the afternoon, even in frosty weather. Understandably she was not best pleased if the preacher did not arrive. She and her friends, of course, provided hospitality for itinerant preachers.

Mary Hardy's diary and Margaret Bird's extensive study of the diary's background reveal much about the development of rural dissent, including the extent to which Wesleyan societies benefitted from the work of Anglican evangelical itinerants and Calvinistic preachers, and people's willingness to travel long distances to meetings, the extent of the support of the prosperous middling and better-sorts, and the contribution of women as preachers and active members. Although an expensive volume, at pages per pound it, together with the other three volumes, is very good value for money. All are beautifully produced, with many illustrations, and reflect extensive archival research and state of the art scholarship in all areas with which I have any familiarity.

*Bill Jacob*

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1 Available from Burnham Press, Burnham Lodge, 193 Richmond Road, Kingston upon Thames KT2 DD. [www.burnham-press.co.uk](http://www.burnham-press.co.uk)

2 Guestwick Chapel was rebuilt in 1840. It is listed, but unused.

3 There are photographs of the Briston and Fakenham chapels at pp 192, 324, 207. Briston Congregational Chapel closed in 1990, and is now a private house. The Wesleyans rebuilt Mendham's Briston chapel in 1812. It closed in 2010, and was converted to a house.

4 Little Walsingham Chapel is still in use, and usually open.

5 Cley-next-the-Sea Chapel was rebuilt in 1839, and is now a house.