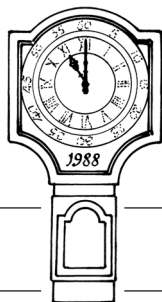


THE CHAPELS SOCIETY



Newsletter 80

May 2022



*The east (side) elevation of Whitestone Baptist Chapel (1821–22),
Withington, Herefordshire, which opened 200 years ago this month. The history of
this delightful rural chapel has come full circle: it was founded by missionaries from the
Baptist chapel at Hereford, which now looks after and runs it. See the article on page 4
(photograph copyright J. Edward C. Peters)*

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NOTICEBOARD

CHAPELS SOCIETY EVENTS

30 June 2022

Copy deadline for August 2022 *Newsletter*

2 July 2022

Chapels Society Annual General Meeting and half-day visit to London led by Bill Jacob (**booking deadline 18 June 2022**)

15 October 2022

Autumn visit to Brighton led by Matt Davis (**booking deadline 17 September 2022**)

EDITORIAL

This edition reveals some interesting details about one Baptist chapel and celebrates the bicentenary of another; but a significant national anniversary is also upon us. The golden jubilee of the United Reformed Church is marked both by an historical tour of some of its most interesting chapels and by a look at some of the churches opened since 1972; and in the next *Newsletter* I would like to feature some of your favourite URC chapels. I encourage you to send in stories, photos and notes about buildings which resonate with you and represent something of the present denomination's long history. That edition will be issued in August instead of the usual September: we are pleased to report that from now on we will be publishing four *Newsletters* per year instead of three. Please do keep your valuable contributions coming in!

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

‘COMMUNITIES OF DISSENT’ CONFERENCE, OXFORD, 30 APRIL 2022

More than 50 Chapels Society members and guests gathered on this sunny Saturday for a stimulating and varied programme of lectures and discussions on aspects of chapels and their place in society, particularly during the period between 1850 and World War I. Our venue, Harris Manchester College, was appropriate given its roots as a Dissenting academy; and we were made most welcome there by College Principal Professor Jane Shaw, Librarian Kate Alderson-Smith and their colleagues. The visit included a tour of the college chapel, library and grounds as well as three comprehensive lectures – all of which demonstrated the effectiveness of detailed, well-focused research, in which quantitative analysis and statistical rigour were combined with a keen appreciation of the human and social side of chapels and their people. The three papers, which were followed by a fruitful panel discussion and question-and-answer session, covered the interrelationship between chapel, family and community in north-west Wales, on Bodmin Moor and more widely in British society during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. During this time the culture of religious dissent became fully developed and ‘gave a distinctive character to many communities’, in the words of the Family and Community Historical Research Society (FACHRS) – with whom the ‘Communities of Dissent’ project was undertaken, under the leadership of Dr Kate Tiller. The lectures and additional material from the extensive research undertaken by FACHRS members will be published in a special edition of the Chapels Society *Journal*.

Matt Davis

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

New members

We are pleased to be able to welcome as new members of the Society: Grant Elliott of Ivybridge in Devon, who is a conservation architect; Diana Evans of Historic England; Gary Crossley of Truro, who has a special interest in the history of Methodism in Cornwall; Frances Richardson, of Gwynedd; and Harvey Lloyd, of Gwynedd. Some of these will be familiar to those who attended the ‘Communities of Dissent’ in Oxford at the end of April. All are equally welcome.

Email addresses

Please could members remember to inform the Membership Secretary if they update their email addresses? The Society sends out occasional emails with information which it thinks members may find useful or interesting, the most

recent of which was sent on 2 April. If you think you have provided your email address to the Society but did not receive that message, or if you would like to be added to the email distribution, then please inform the Membership Secretary at sjleadley@hotmail.co.uk.

Stuart Leadley

WHITESTONE BAPTIST CHAPEL, WITHINGTON, HEREFORDSHIRE

AN ARTICLE BY J. EDWARD C. PETERS

Whitestone Baptist Chapel in Withington parish in Herefordshire was formed as a result of a rural mission undertaken in the early 19th century by the Baptist Chapel in Hereford. Interestingly, the survival of the chapel and its work in the late 20th century was owing to action by the same chapel. The building is on the north side of the main Hereford to Worcester road, in the south part of Withington parish, just west of the Whitestone crossroads. The loss of early records in a fire has limited the study of its history.

The work was, in its first 35 years or so, connected with two brothers, Rees and Joseph Davies. They were born near Lampeter in Cardiganshire, and in due course attended the Baptist college at Abergavenny. They were then sent out as missionaries by the Baptist chapel in Hereford: Rees, in 1815, to Withington, Joseph, apparently at the same time, to Eardisland. The work at Withington seems to have prospered, as Rees Davies purchased a small plot of land in 1821, which was then conveyed to trustees to build a chapel. This was opened in May the following year. It is set back a little from the road, oriented north/south, with a two-storey section at the north end as the manse. The chapel and the site cost £450; how this sum was raised is not recorded.

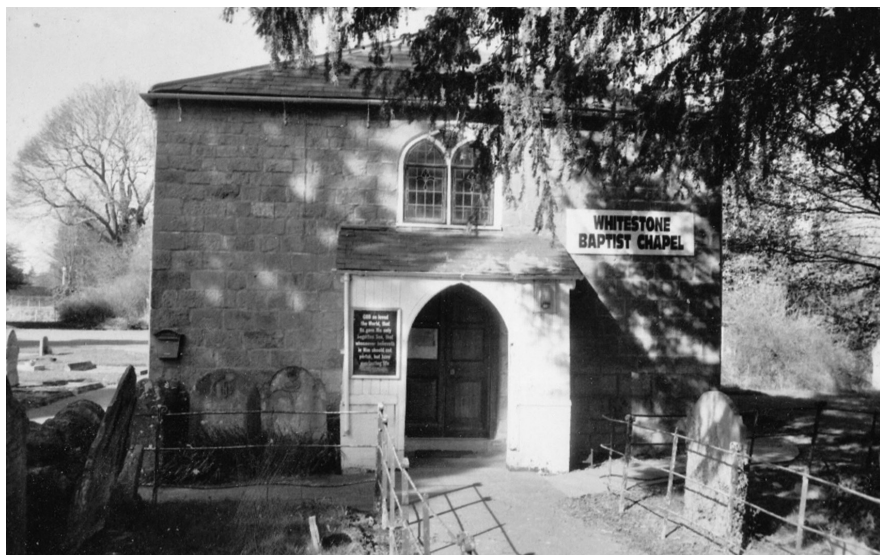


In 1827 Rees Davies emigrated to America, and the work was taken over by his brother. A day school was carried on in the chapel, but whether this began when the chapel was opened or later is not clear, nor how long it lasted. The census return for 1841 shows that Joseph Davies was living in the manse with his wife, an elderly dependent and a young servant girl. He is said to have taken the chapel into the Strict and Particular Baptists, which adversely affected the number of members. Davies died in 1850, and was followed by the Rev. John Ramsey, who signed the Religious Census return of 1851. He and his wife were involved with the school in the chapel. There seem to have been six different ministers serving the chapel between 1850 and 1884, when the Rev. William Price took over. He continued until 1931. The chapel benefited from the support of W.H. Godwin, who owned the important encaustic tile works nearby. When he died in 1925 it was noted that he had worshipped at the chapel for some 60 years, and had, *inter alia*, been Sunday School superintendent. His ability to help financially will have been restricted after 1912, however, as he then became bankrupt.

The work of the chapel seems to have continued to prosper into the 20th century, but decline had set in by the 1930s. Membership had fallen to three by 1974, when the chapel was closed for six months. However, the Baptist Chapel in Hereford, or perhaps initially one member, was concerned at the loss of witness here, and so arrangements were made for Hereford to take over the spiritual oversight of the chapel, so that services could continue. In 1985 this was extended to full responsibility for the fabric, three members from Hereford being appointed to run the chapel. Repairs to the building were then able to be made.

The chapel, as noted above, was built in 1821–22: the builder, and probably the designer, was John Davies, who signed the contract drawing below the minister. The original design had been slightly modified before the contract was signed: the modifications were very largely internal, and did not affect the overall size of the building. The chapel itself was enlarged by two feet at the expense of the manse: perhaps partly to compensate, the rear room in the manse was enlarged by a few inches at the expense of the front one. A window was added over the main door to the chapel. In the chapel itself the pulpit was shown in the centre of the north wall, facing the entrance. On its west was the door from the manse. So that the pulpit should be centrally placed, the steps up to it were on the east. The box pews shown in front and to each side of the pulpit were an addition to the original design: to provide space for them the baptistery had to be moved a little to the south.

The chapel is of stone, with a plinth. The public, that is the east and south walls, are of squared, regularly coursed stone courses of a reasonable depth. On the west side, originally the site boundary, the stone is less well squared and the courses irregular. The windows all have arched heads, with wooden frames and leaded lights, except for the lower openings in the manse, which have flat, stone lintels. The roof is hipped, originally finished with blue Welsh

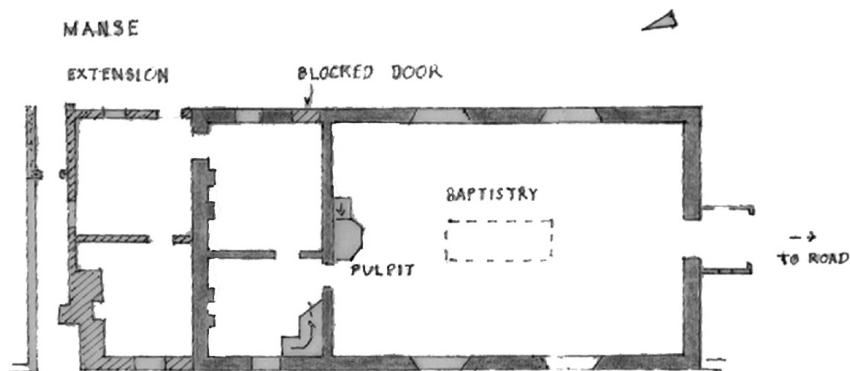


The front elevation of Whitestone Baptist Chapel; the entrance faces the road. Note the gravestones and the noticeboard featuring a biblical text (photograph copyright J.

Edward C. Peters)

slate. The south porch to the chapel was added in the 1890s. Internally, the chapel is plastered, with a bead run round at dado level. Markings on the walls at the south end indicate the former position of timber rails for coat hooks. The ceiling was curved, the roof trusses above king post, with curved tie beams, the main joints reinforced by iron bolts. Unfortunately, the curved tie beams do not seem to have been as effective as intended in preventing outward pressure on the wallhead, as metal ties have had, at some stage, to be inserted. There was a fireplace in each room in the manse.

The religious census of 1851 noted seating for 270, all free, with an unspecified number able to stand in the aisle and vestry 'because of [the] crowded congregation'. This suggests that the rear ground floor room in the manse must have doubled as the vestry, being the only one with a door to the chapel. The congregation reported on census Sunday was 200 in the morning, 380 in the afternoon, with no evening service. Whilst the afternoon figure seems surprising, the writer has come across other examples. The Brethren meeting at Ross in Herefordshire had seating for 200, but reported 240 at the evening service; the Primitive Methodist chapel in Newcastle-under-Lyme in Staffordshire had seating for 280, but 351 at the evening service. The Sunday school at Whitestone had 20 pupils morning and afternoon, and must have been held somewhere in the manse. In passing, the membership of the chapel was drawn from an area extending to about a three-mile radius, which might account for the lack of an evening service.



PLAN.

The entrance to the manse was into the larger, front room, so that the rear room might have been expected to have been the kitchen, although from the Religious Census it appears also to have been the vestry. The rear room also contained the stairs to the upper floor. At some stage between 1841 and 1884 the manse was enlarged to the north, doubling its size. The new rear room was the kitchen, with a large fireplace projection, which probably also included an oven. The front door was moved into the extension, with, at least latterly, a cantilevered, gabled hood over the door. The extension is of brick, except for the ground-floor external walls of the kitchen, which are of rubble stone. The room over the kitchen may have served some purpose other than a bedroom, as it had a very wide window. Some time in the 1920s or 1930s a single storey extension was built to the north east of the manse, forming a scullery and wash-house.

The chapel was repaired after 1985, the pews and heating apparatus removed, plaster repaired, and a flat ceiling installed below the curved original, which was beginning to fail. New W.C. accommodation was provided in the front room of the manse extension. The manse was used for a while as a Sunday School, as well as the vestry.

Six wall monuments were recorded in the chapel in 1990–91, the earliest to the Rev. Joseph Davies and his wife. On the west wall is one of painted, glazed tiles to W.H. Godwin and his wife, recording, inter alia, their involvement in the chapel.

The front part of the plot formed the original burial ground, extending back as far as the front wall of the chapel. The earliest burial dates from 1821 or 1822. A small stone shed was erected at the southeast corner of the original site, probably as a stable. It is now said to contain the bier. The plot was enlarged on the east by the early 1870s, surrounded by a stone wall. This was to provide additional space for burials. This in turn became full, and the field to the west

of the chapel was purchased, certainly by about 1920 (the earliest burial there is 1922). A stone shed had been built in the south-east corner of this field by 1884, but this must have been by the previous owner; it was probably a stable. It was doubled in size between 1884 and 1902, but the extension has since been demolished. At the end of the 20th century the north end of the field was made into a car park, with a drive from the road, curving to avoid the graves. The chapel and burial ground were still in use in 2018.

The research for this article was undertaken in 2017 and 2018. The writer is indebted to Mr K. Edwards of Hereford for access to the building, some information and papers, and for a copy of the contract drawing. Various papers, maps and directories were consulted at the Herefordshire Archive and Record Centre. Also consulted were Paved with Living Colour, a Pattern Book of Godwin Tiles, by R. Griffiths, 2014, and the Victoria County History of Staffordshire, vol. VIII, 1963.

BAPTISTS AND BAPTISMS AT THURLSTONE

AN ARTICLE BY GERARD CHARMLEY

In 1867 the Baptists of Thurlstone, a village outside the South Yorkshire town of Penistone, erected a new chapel on a gentle bank opposite the large village Sunday School which was erected by subscription in 1780. This chapel replaced an older and simpler building, erected for the church after their separation from the Independent chapel at Bullhouse in 1828. The new chapel stood in a more prominent position than the old (which was in the middle of a farmyard), and presented a striking, if plain, appearance to the village. The chapel name, Providence, travelled with the congregation. Beside this new chapel, which stood in its own grounds, there was an open-air baptistery. Prior to this date baptisms were conducted either in a local stream which had to be dammed for the purpose, or in the River Don, which flows nearby.

This was by no means an unusual arrangement; Nathan Haigh, the historian of Scapegoat Hill Baptist Church near Huddersfield, observed that: ‘Here in the home country, though our climate is not as mild as that of Palestine, open-air baptisms, in former times, were no unusual sight.’ Perhaps the best-known picture of an open-air baptism in Yorkshire is to be found in this book, for Scapegoat Hill’s baptistery was located on the side of a hill, allowing the scene to be captured in full. Similarly, Zion Strict Baptist Chapel, Siddal, possessed an open-air baptistery in the chapel yard, although this has long since vanished, along with the chapel and its immediate neighbourhood. Whilst open-air



*Photograph of a baptismal service at Providence Chapel, Thurlstone, in 1894
(photographed by Gerard Charmley)*

baptisms initially took place for want of a pool elsewhere, or for the sake of secrecy, by the nineteenth century they had become occasions at which the general public could witness the putting on of an open profession of faith by the candidate or candidates. David Smith, pastor at Siddal, baptised eleven converts in the River Thames before a crowd estimated at between two or three thousand when taking services at Blunsdon chapel, near Swindon, for example.

In the chapel at Thurlstone are two framed photographs of baptismal services at the chapel, the first in 1894 and the second in 1895. The first, in March 1894, was of Benjamin Walshaw (later senior deacon at the chapel), Hannah Hinchliffe and Thomas Roebuck. It was conducted by Robert Moxon, pastor at Bury Chapel and a native of Clayton West, not far from Thurlstone. The chapel yard is packed, with children standing on the wall and a couple of ladies in shawls standing beyond the gate. Possibly the number of candidates attracted such attention, although it is most likely that it was the presence of Mr Moxon, who was a well-regarded minister. The second baptism photographed took place on 3 June 1895, and was conducted by F. S. McKee of Southport. Numbers are considerably fewer than in the former photograph, with only the area around the baptistery being occupied rather than the whole chapel yard. The baptised on this occasion were Haydn Roebuck (brother of Thomas) and Mary Ann Booth. Whilst most of the congregation look to the pool where the service is

taking place, a number of children look straight at the camera, and a man with a moustache appears to have noticed them. Thurlstone did not at this point in its history have a pastor, although John Booth, later minister at Bradford, had recently been authorised to preach. Most of the congregation appear to be either skilled working-class or lower middle class – flat caps alternate with bowler hats, although there are a few tops hats visible here and there. Similarly, the women in the congregation mostly wear shawls, although some ladies in hats are visible in the first photograph.



*Baptism, of Mary Ann Booth,
and Haydn Roebuck, June 3rd 1895.
by F. S. Mc. Kee,*

*Photograph of a baptismal service at Providence Chapel, Thurlstone, in 1895
(photographed by Gerard Charmley)*

When Providence Chapel was refurbished in 1928, the church's centenary year, a baptistery was installed in the chapel and the old outdoor baptistery fell out of use. It was photographed a little while before this, and left to decay. Today the baptistery is cracked and useless, largely overgrown with ivy, and has a tree growing out of it. The images preserved in the chapel, however, are a reminder of the function of the baptistery and its witness in the village.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AT FIFTY

AN ARTICLE BY MICHAEL HOPKINS

1972 was the first iteration of the United Reformed Church when many Congregationalists and Presbyterians south of the Tweed joined together. The union enlarged in 1981 when many Churches of Christ congregations joined, and enlarged further in 2000 when the Congregational Union of Scotland joined. Scottish Congregationalism had a very different history from its English cousin.

This article tells something of the story, by highlighting certain chapels. The chapel at **Maesyrannon** in mid-Wales is the oldest in Wales, reputed to have been visited by Cromwell and still meeting in its unusual 17th-century building. Just over five miles from **Chippenham**, Wiltshire, is Monks Chapel – a little-altered 17th-century chapel from the days of the Five Mile Act. So too is the chapel at **Middle Lambrook** in Somerset, although the current building is a little later.

At the other end of England, at **Falstone** in rural Northumberland, in 1660 the Presbyterians retained the ruined medieval parish church, replaced it with a new chapel on the same site in 1709, and rebuilt it in 1807. (Not until 1725 was a new parish church provided.) Not too far away at **Glanton**, a Presbyterian church was founded in 1691, and the current chapel built in 1783. In rural Northumberland the Presbyterian chapel was sometimes the only church in a village, and some have said the ecclesiastical border between England and Scotland would have been better drawn at the Tyne than the Tweed.

In Swaledale, Philip, Lord Wharton, built a Dissenters' meeting house in 1690, and protected Dissenters in the dale. In 1809 the chapel moved to the more accessible village of **Low Row**, and in 1867 declared Congregational, having previously tended to be Presbyterian. Up the dale at **Keld**, the Congregational chapel, manse, school, and literary institute began in 1789.

The chapel at Castle Hill in **Northampton** was built in 1695, and Philip Doddridge was its minister from 1729 to 1751. Other historic chapels nearby include **Daventry** (built in 1722 for a congregation which began in 1662), **Long Buckby** (1771 for a congregation dating from 1707) and **Aston Tirrold**, now in Oxfordshire, where the church formed in 1662 and meets in a chapel of 1728.

In the 19th century, the traditions in the United Reformed Church became popular and respectable. In market towns across England new churches sprang up. The chapel at Princes Street in **Norwich** was built in 1869, to the designs of the major Norwich architect Edward Boardman, a member of the congregation. The interior was decked out in the rich, bright colours of the High Victorian period. Members included the Dixon family who were iron founders in Norwich, and the Colman family of mustard fame. At **Farnham** in Surrey, after the removal of all restrictions upon Nonconformists, the Congregationalists built a large chapel



*Aston Tirrold United Reformed Church (1728) in October 2015
(photograph copyright Oswald Bertram, adapted from geograph.org.uk/photo/4702521:
licensed for reuse under Creative Commons licence CC BY-SA 2.0)*

with pointy windows, stained glass, and a spire taller than the parish church, in 1873 on what was then a new road to the then new railway station, and the main thoroughfare: a demonstration that they were a true church with a permanent presence. Town records show that many of the shopkeepers and other influential people in the town were Congregationalists. By contrast, the chapel at Ramsden Street in **Barrow-in-Furness** is a small, plain building in a back street, which was not unusual for the Churches of Christ tradition, always strong in Furness and in the East Midlands. Their chapels generally contained baptisteries for believer's baptism, and they usually celebrated communion each week, with a common cup. Their ministers were 'non-clerical', and tended to use extemporary prayers.

The Congregational tradition in Scotland was entirely Scottish, with an entirely different history from England. One chapel of particular interest is the Morison Memorial chapel at **Clydebank**, not for its building, but because it commemorates John Morison, leader of the main division within Scottish Congregationalism, a theological difference focussed upon theology of atonement. Another Scottish chapel worthy of mention is at **Morningside** in Edinburgh, one of what were the four churches at 'Holy Corner'. The current Art Deco/Romanesque-style chapel (1926–27) was designed by architect James McLachlan, FRIBA. It supported many missionaries, and its Missionary Roll of Honour included Eric Liddell.

After World War Two, the Presbyterian Church of England developed a policy of planting new churches in the commuter towns around London, and used funds from the War Damage Commission towards some of these buildings rather than rebuilding every bombed-out church in London. One of these was what was founded as St Margaret's Presbyterian Church in **Rugby** in 1944, where a chapel was completed in 1955. Other chapels built under this policy included **Aylesbury**, **Bedford**, and **Luton**. Later in the 20th century, Surrey Heath Borough Council compulsorily purchased a significant part of **Camberley** town centre in the late 1980s, and built a church for the United Reformed and Methodist churches, known as High Cross Church.

Chapel building has not stopped in the 21st century. At **Idle**, in Bradford, the cause can trace origins from 1630, with a clear separation from the Church of England after 1660, and opened their fifth building in 2020. In **Eastbourne**, two Methodist churches and two United Reformed Churches have come together, and are building a new chapel known as Emmanuel. What was originally the Crossway at **Elephant and Castle** in south London began in 1860, and moved into a new building in 2017, as part of major redevelopments in the area.

From the 17th century to the 21st century, across the country, the traditions of the United Reformed Church continue to be found in a wide variety of chapels.

[Editor's note – An article on the recent developments in Eastbourne has been prepared and will appear in a forthcoming *Newsletter*.]

* * * *

Michael Hopkins' article reminds us that many of the chapels inherited by the URC have been used for worship for very many years: its stock of historic buildings is great indeed. As also noted, though, the denomination has built plenty of its own since 1972. This anniversary year seems like a good time to report on a few.

Newly built chapels of the 'URC era' fall into several categories. The brief profiles of five churches which follow each represent one decade and one 'category'.

Replacement buildings: Christ Church, Tonbridge, Kent (1970s)

Congregationalist worship in the town has an unbroken history since 1751. A chapel of 1791 was replaced in December 1875 by a larger one of a standard Gothic Revival design. The decision to move was prompted by a realisation that the town's focus was moving southwards towards the railway station – and this instinct was right because the new site turned out to be perfect, right in the commercial heart of town on the High Street. Severe flooding in the town in 1968 affected the chapel badly, and in 1976 it had to be demolished and rebuilt. The church decided to stay on its prominent site, and a characteristic 1970s building



*Christ Church on Tonbridge High Street seen in 2012
(photograph copyright Matt Davis)*

of a decisively modern form rose up over the next two years. A high-quality modern hall and community facility which was built to the rear in 1987 has the added benefit of advertising the church prominently to users of the shoppers' car park which it overlooks. The new Christ Church is of white blocks with a swept-up roof and extensive glazing at the top. Fronting the street is a welcoming shopfront-style entrance.

Ecumenical endeavours: Christ Church (URC/Methodist), Chichester, Sussex (1980s)

For nearly 100 years, two large chapels faced each other diagonally across South Street: Congregational on the west side, Wesleyan on the east. The latter was older (1876) and was by Alexander Lauder in a curious, elaborate mixture of Gothic Revival and Italianate. Edward J. Hamilton (see *Newsletter* 78 for more on him) designed the Congregational chapel in 1892: a rag-stone building with an apsidal end. With declining congregations at both, it was decided to sell the chapels and move in together in a new building. This happened in 1982, and both were demolished. The new joint Methodist and United Reformed church makes clever use of a restricted site behind the old Methodist chapel: it is of

square form with chamfered corners, a rearward extension with a porch in the join, a small eastward projection and a pyramidal roof, giving the building a street presence out of proportion to its small size.

(A word also on High Cross Church (Methodist/URC), Camberley, Surrey, mentioned above. Situated right in the centre of town and opened in 1990, its bold lines harmonise well with the town's modern architecture, and it incorporates a large and evidently popular café. It replaced former Wesleyan and Congregational chapels of 1913 and 1930 respectively. The original Congregational chapel on Obelisk Street was in fact built by Primitive Methodists.)

Selling and moving elsewhere: Fareham URC, Hampshire (1990s)

One of the oldest religious buildings in the town was the Congregational chapel of 1836 by James Adams, a local man. (Congregationalists had in fact been active locally since the 17th century.) It was a classic town-centre Gothic chapel, like



Fareham's United Reformed Church of 1836, seen here in 2019 as part of the Slug and Lettuce pub, was replaced by a new building nearby in 1994 (photograph copyright Matt Davis)

Tonbridge a significant presence on the main shopping street. The symmetrical three-bay façade of yellow brick features two sets of buttresses, the centre pair shooting a couple of sharp pinnacles above the roofline. The chapel was sold in 1994 upon completion of a new building for the congregation, still in a good town-centre location. The K. C. White Partnership's low red-brick church has been praised: while not as explicitly chapel-like as its predecessor (now incorporated into a pub), it is a well-planned and hospitable building, given some distinction by a big roof lantern and set in a delightful 'Garden of Reflection'. The old chapel is listed and is featured in Christopher Stell's *Inventory*.

Consolidation of congregations: Trinity URC, Charminster, Dorset (2000s)

Many modern United Reformed churches came about through mergers of existing congregations. This church's name reflects not just the denomination's Trinitarian ethos but the three worship communities in this northern part of Bournemouth which came together in 2001 in this well-appointed and pleasant small church. Congregational chapels opened in Charminster, Queen's Park (Sutton Road) and Moordown in the first 30 years of the 20th century. Charminster, the oldest, was the first to close, in 1983 – it was demolished for shops – and some members moved the mile or so north to Sutton Road. With these premises deteriorating, it was decided to sell the site for redevelopment and rebuild on the adjacent land – not an uncommon strategy when churches on valuable sites need to modernise their buildings. Moordown gave the Sutton Road congregation a temporary home, then sold their premises to the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church and moved into the new church as well. It is a low, pale brick building with a rectangular hall and a stretched hexagonal worship space linked by a wide glazed entrance corridor.

New foundations: Wroxham and Hoveton URC, Norfolk (2010s)

Wroxham Free Church, as it was then known, joined the URC in 1972 as a very young newcomer: the worship community had been founded only two years earlier. Hoveton village hall and then the hall of Wroxham's Anglican parish church provided homes for the congregation until 2014, when the opportunity arose to buy a derelict vehicle maintenance workshop in Wroxham. This dreary, functional building was transformed in less than a year into a chapel of considerable charm and character, with a distinctly traditional appearance but modern facilities. Good use has been made of brick, wood and tile, and the main wall has pointed windows surrounded by white cladding. The building was highly commended in the National Federation of Builders Awards 2014 (Refurbishment of the Year category).

NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST FOR ENGLAND: NEWLY LISTED PLACES OF WORSHIP

Just one new and one upgraded listing in the first three months of 2022:

William Booth Memorial Halls, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire (Grade II; NHLE reference 1454672; designed in 1914–15 by Oswald Archer)

The Nottingham No. 1 Corps of the Salvation Army was founded in 1879 and has met at this elegant Neo-classical hall since it was completed in 1915 to the design of the Army's in-house architect. The name commemorates the Salvation Army's founder, who was born locally and who died in 1912. The red-brick and stone building is little altered.

St Mary's Church, Ryde, Isle of Wight (Grade II*; NHLE reference 1216915; designed in 1844–46 by J.A. Hansom)

For its size, the island has a remarkable range of Catholic buildings. Ryde's parish church can now claim Grade II* status alongside Newport's late-18th-century church, although neither can (yet!) match the Grade I status enjoyed by the exuberantly Expressionist Quarr Abbey. St Mary's Church was expensively endowed by Elizabeth, Countess of Clare, following her conversion from Anglicanism in 1841. Hansom, who was commissioned because A.W.N. Pugin had a full book of work at the time, was early in his career. He adopted the Gothic Revival style for which he became famous, fitting the church well into the awkward site. The stone was quarried locally.

DESECULARISATION DIGEST: EMMANUEL FREE CHURCH, NORMANDY, SURREY

The parish of Normandy consists of a string of tiny villages on heathland west of Guildford, directly below the famous Hog's Back on the North Downs. A surprising range of chapels existed over the past two centuries (and have been usefully documented by the local history society), but since 1970 the Methodist chapel, a wonderfully ramshackle wood-and-asbestos Gospel hall and a little Catholic chapel – a reused World War I army hut – have closed and have been demolished. The United Reformed Church is still represented, though – and having outgrown an early 19th-century chapel, the village telephone exchange is now used.

James Horne, later associated with the Wesleyan Methodist cause in

the village, moved to Normandy in 1822 and sought to establish a place of Nonconformist worship. His beliefs were evidently not ‘fixed’ denominationally at this time: he led house meetings of a Wesleyan character but also worshipped at the Independent (later Congregational, now United Reformed) chapel in nearby Worplesdon. As well as being responsible for Normandy parish’s first Wesleyan chapel – which was built on his land in the 1850s – he was heavily involved in founding the Congregational chapel, which opened on 4 October 1825. The tiny brick building, with a windowless façade and a small porch with a disproportionately high doorway, was built by the worshippers themselves. The costs of the materials and site were paid off just a day later. The Surrey Congregational Mission looked after it until 1874, when the church at Guildford took responsibility with assistance from Aldershot Presbyterian Church – an interesting early collaboration between these denominations, nearly a century before they united! Some modernisation, including the installation of electricity, took place in the 1950s; but by the 1980s it was clear that the building was no longer big enough for its sizeable congregation (which had quite possibly been augmented by worshippers from the former Methodist chapel and the former Gospel hall, which was originally a non-denominational mission hall). Extensions or rebuilds on the site were not an option, but luckily British Telecom put the redundant village telephone exchange on the market around the same time. A rapid fundraising effort allowed the congregation to buy it and refit it



*Emmanuel Free Church (United Reformed), Glaziers Lane, Normandy, in May 2014
(photograph copyright Matt Davis)*

as a chapel in 1985. The present name, Emmanuel Free Church, was taken six years later.

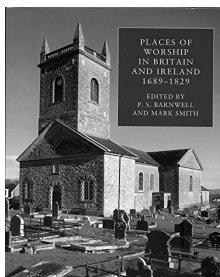
Visually the telephone exchange makes a convincing chapel, with its deep pyramidal roof and arched windows, and it is clearly a well-used and superbly maintained building. The old (1825) chapel has been converted into a house and has been made even more chapel-like in the process by the insertion of two tall, narrow pointed-arched windows in the façade. Happily the datestone has been retained above the remodelled porch.

See <https://normandyhistorians.co.uk/candc.html> for a wealth of material about the churches and chapels of Normandy parish, including the interesting memoirs of James Horne.

Unlikely as it may seem, just 8 miles west is another place of worship in a former telephone exchange ... but the story of the new Brethren meeting room in Farnham must wait for *Newsletter* 81!

BOOK REVIEWS

Places of Worship in Britain and Ireland 1689–1829 edited by P. S. Barnwell and Mark Smith. Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2021. 256pp, hardback. ISBN 978-1-907730-88-7. £45



This handsome volume, edited by P. S. Barnwell and Mark Smith, is the twelfth in the series of Rewley House Studies in the Historic Environment, and the sixth dedicated to places of worship in Britain and Ireland. Covering as it does the period from the Toleration Act to the Catholic Emancipation Act, for the first time this series deals with an environment where Nonconformity was tolerated under the law, albeit subject to occasional riotous disturbances. As such, this era saw the flowering

of Nonconformist architecture, the emergence of Methodism in its various manifestations, and its effect on the various churches, and the first stirrings of the Gothic Revival. In the words of Mark Smith, ‘...for the first time, Dissenting meeting houses became a notable feature of the built environment of English religion with over a thousand formal and informal meeting places being registered in the first year of toleration alone.’ Although a fair number of these would have been houses or adapted structures, this statistic indicates the scale of the challenge to the supremacy of the established church.

This book is organised is divided into ten chapters, with a conclusion by one of the editors. Mark Smith opens the book with a general discussion of the state of the churches in this period, tracing the development of revivalism and increasing diversity of the English religious scene. Two of these chapters are devoted to the Church of England, whilst chapels and meeting-houses are given

two chapters: Christopher Wakeling's study of chapel-building in the age of Methodism, and Ann-Marie Akehurst's study of early Quaker Meeting Houses. William Roulston's study of Irish places of worship is a fascinating examination of the buildings constructed by the Established Church, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics and their contrasting buildings (many Roman Catholic chapels being small and plain because of the poverty of their congregations) but also the widespread embrace of classicism. John Fawcett's examination of Scottish Church architecture emphasises the demands made upon buildings by the change from sacramental to word-focused worship. All the chapters are well illustrated with a mixture of historic and modern images (although the caption for Figure 3.5 indicates that the author intended an eastward, rather than westward view of SS. Peter & Paul, Langton by Spilsby). Separate chapters deal with Scotland and Ireland, countries in which the pattern of worship and church allegiance differed markedly from that in England.

Bill Jacob and Christopher Webster provide a welcome push-back to the ecclesiologists' dismissal of the churches of this period as ugly or uninspired, producing ample evidence that English church architects thought deeply about new buildings, producing some outstanding and innovative places of worship, in contrast to the rather more slavish imitation of the ecclesiologists. Bill Jacob notes the continuing desire of churchmen that the English church should conform to the 'Primitive Church', and the 'tension between traditional Gothic church designs and current architectural trends', especially in the matter of towers. Key here, as in other essays, is the focus upon the word preached as well as the sacrament. Even the excellent essay on British synagogues points to the emphasis upon the word.

Christopher Wakeling's contribution on chapel-building in the age of Methodism traces a number of influences on chapel design, including the important role played by a number of buildings and, like that of Ann-Marie Akehurst, shows that the image of the architecturally illiterate Dissenter is wide of the mark, but rather that, like their Anglican cousins, Dissenters constructed religious buildings which suited their particular needs and frequently with a sophisticated understanding of architecture. If the opposite view has at times seemed to prevail, this is in part because both Anglicans and Dissenters have found it convenient to propagate the myth, albeit for different reasons (one recalls a Congregational deacon waxing eloquent on the plainness of his chapel whilst I was admiring the classical orders on the gallery columns). Several interesting themes are raised in the other essays in this well-presented book. If there is one criticism of the volume it would be its lack of a separate chapter for Wales, given chapters covering Scotland and Ireland.

Overall, this is a worthy addition to an interesting series, a good read and an attractive book, well worth a read.

Gerard Charmley

Sent from Reading: Reading's Part in Overseas Missions 1790–1950 by John Dearing. 2021. v+180pp, paperback. ISBN 978-1-739938-80-2. £10. (Available from J.B. Dearing, 27 Sherman Road, Reading RG1 2PJ; email address john.dearing@gpwild.co.uk)

Activities relating to overseas missions were a significant feature of chapel life in the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, with letters from 'our link missionary' and visits from missionaries on furlough and fundraising events for missionary societies. Chapel congregations' horizons were broadened by these links and they became recruiting grounds for missionaries as well as a major source of funding for missionary societies. A study of a town's part in overseas mission throws light on the life of chapels as well as on missionary endeavours.

Reading is a particularly interesting example for it was an early centre of Anglican evangelicalism under W.B. Cadogan, vicar of St Giles's between 1775 and 1797. One of his curates John Eyre was associated with Archibald Douglas, minister of Broad Street Congregational chapel, in founding the earliest English protestant missionary society, the predominantly Congregationalist London Missionary Society (LMS). One of Cadogan's converts, a Reading boy, Charles Simeon, was formative in Anglican evangelicalism, and a founder of the Anglican evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS). Another, William Marsh, was a founder of the Church's Mission to Jews, seeking to fulfil prophecy and prepare for the second coming by converting God's ancient people. Later in the nineteenth century a Reading man was involved in pioneering protestant missionary work in South America, leading to the founding of the Anglican evangelical South American Missionary Society (SAMS).

Mr Dearing allocates chapters to Reading people associated with various missionary societies including the LMS, CMS, the Anglican Church Mission to the Jews and the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, SAMS and Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, and Wesleyan ministers who served in Australia and South Africa. As this list suggests the majority of the missionaries identified were Anglican evangelicals, mostly of a more conservative tendency. His very helpful indexes of places, as well as of people, churches and missionary and other institutions, reveals the numbers of people who ventured out from Reading across the world to witness to their faith in all sorts of ways – in India, Egypt, South America, Samoa, New Zealand, Uganda, Japan, China, Hong Kong, South Africa, Iran, Canada, Burundi, Sri Lanka, the Falkland Islands, Kenya and Myanmar.

This study illustrates how the fissiparous tendencies of Anglican evangelicalism and Nonconformity contributed much to the increase of churches in Reading. Cadogan's successor at St Giles was considered by Cadogan's friends and some of St Giles congregation to be an 'enemy of the Gospel' (i.e. not an evangelical) and the congregation split, Cadogan's followers establishing Castle Street chapel.

Subsequently, that congregation split again when the majority decided to revert to Anglicanism, as St Mary's Castle Street. A group seceded from Broad Street Congregational chapel in 1840 to form Trinity chapel in East Reading.

Mr Dearing reminds us of the significant element overseas missionary work played in the lives of chapels and churches until the mid-twentieth century, and of the courage of the many men and, from the 1880s, women who left the security of homes, churches and chapels for distant and little-known lands. They had to learn new skills and new languages to serve as missionaries, also working in many instances as teachers, doctors and nurses, often in challenging circumstances. There are also hints of the human tensions that might arise between English-based missionary society staff and people working in the field, and with colonial administrators.

Bill Jacob

BOOK NOTICES

Wiltshire Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses by James Holden (ISBN 978-1-914407-28-4), a 334-page, colour-illustrated guide and gazetteer, has recently been published on behalf of the Wiltshire Buildings Record. The retail price is £20.00, but until 30 September 2022 it is available at the special price of £15.00 (+£2.50 for postage, or collect from the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre at Chippenham). To purchase a copy, write to Wiltshire Buildings Record, Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Cocklebury Road, CHIPPENHAM, SN15 3QN or email dorothy.treasure@wiltshire.gov.uk. Cheques for £17.50 inclusive of postage should be made out to Wiltshire Buildings Record, or a bank transfer can be made to Lloyds TSB sort code 30-98-75, account number 02160045. A review of the book will appear in *Newsletter* 81.

Late-Georgian Churches by Christopher Webster (ISBN 978-1-739822-90-3), a 320-page, colour-illustrated study of church buildings of that era, has also been published recently and will be reviewed in a forthcoming *Newsletter*. See <https://boybrew.co/LGC> for information. Chapels Society members can buy the book for £60.00, a 25% discount on the cover price, by using the code BB029 (zero-two-nine, not 'O') at the online checkout at the above link. Please contact Sean on marketing@boydell.co.uk with any queries.

NEWS AND NOTES

Were John and Charles Wesley at George Hastings' Funeral?

The photograph of the grave accompanying this article in *Newsletter* 79 was from Westminster Abbey's website and was used with their permission; copyright rests with Westminster Abbey.

Pubs as places of worship

Last *Newsletter's* 'Desecularisation Digest' has prompted John H. Hall to mention the Quaker meeting house at King's Lynn, Norfolk. This is a Grade II-listed 18th-century inn formerly known by the uncommon name of The Hulk. The local Quaker community bought it in 1986, 16 years after the compulsory purchase and demolition of their old meeting house, and converted it for worship. Decorative glasswork survives in two doors, such that the meeting house appears to have a 'smoking room' and a 'bar parlour'! (The latter had to be replaced in a matching style after it was vandalised.)

While visiting the Temple Cowley district of Oxford before the April Conference, your Editor found a distinctly pub-like mosque on the main Oxford Road. Sure enough, the Ahlul Bayt Centre was until 2008 a music-oriented pub called the Exeter Hall – a familiar name in Nonconformist circles in 19th-century London!



*The 'bar parlour' door at King's Lynn
Quaker Meeting House
(photograph copyright Joseph McGarraghy)*

New HRBA publications

Two new publications are available to download from the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance website (<https://www.hrballiance.org.uk/resources/publications/>). Both are church-focused but have chapel relevance. *Sustaining historic churches: what does recent research tell us?* consists of summaries and contextual analysis of nine reports relating to the future of places of worship, while *How certain is the victory of conservation? Indeed, have we won?* is a personal reflection on the topic of the conservation of religious buildings from Matthew Saunders, an expert on architecture and historic buildings (and one of the participants in the panel discussion at the 'Communities of Dissent' conference).

A conference on terracotta

The Tiles and Architectural Ceramics Society's recent conference 'Terracotta: Past, Present and Future' has been made available online at <https://tilesoc.org.uk/tacs/index.php/terracotta-conference>. It features a series of lectures giving a detailed exploration of the history, manufacture and use of terracotta, including on religious buildings. Terracotta is particularly associated with late Victorian buildings in Birmingham and Manchester – indeed, Manchester is the subject of a 'virtual tour'.



Turn-of-the-century terracotta: the Grade II-listed Edward Road Baptist Church, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, seen here in March 2022, features bold and intricate buff terracotta decoration. The chapel dates from 1899; the schoolrooms to the right were added in 1900 (photograph copyright Matt Davis)