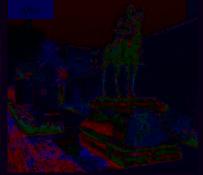
# Methodist Heritage News

Autumn 2011





## Green Oasis' opens in Bristol

On Wesley Day 2011 (24 May), the lord mayor of Bristol was one of over 200 guests at the launch of a new garden in the oldest Methodist building in the world.

The Broadmead Courtyard Garden has been created at the New Room, Bristol. It is intended to be a 'green oasis', welcoming visitors and shoppers to the historic chapel situated in the midst of the bustling, multi-million pound Broadmead Shopping Centre.

The garden uses themes which echo the mid-eighteenth century. It is subdivided into three interconnected spaces, each defined by clipped hedges. The central

space provides a setting for the John Wesley statue, now complemented by stonework around the plinth on which four of his most famous quotations have been engraved. The space closest to the shopping street has a simple herb garden to reflect John's interest in the use of medicinal plants. And the space closest to the chapel has a simple arrangement of stone paving, clipped hedging and a tree.

The wall that dominates the garden section of the courtyard is covered with climbing plants and espaliered fruit trees, again reflecting John Wesley's promotion of health and wellbeing.



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## Editorial

## Heritage News goes international

In this edition we have a contribution from the United States about the links to British Methodist heritage and one from Britain about US Methodist heritage sites. We hope you find them interesting.

There are also pieces from more Methodist sites and an article about *Singing the Faith*, our new Methodist hymn book.

On two occasions recently, the richness of our heritage has been brought home to me. On the first, my wife and I stopped at the Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum and also visited Tolpuddle Methodist Church (featured in our Autumn 2010 edition). The courage of the martyrs, four (possibly five) of whom were Methodist, is an example to all who would stand up for what is right, and a heritage of which we should be proud.

On the second occasion, during a guided walk around Swanage in Dorset, the guide took pleasure in pointing out a plaque commemorating the visit of John Wesley to Swanage in 1774.

These two instances make me 'proud to be a Methodist.'\* Enjoy *Heritage News*!

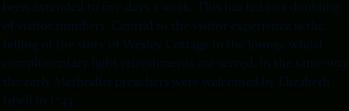
John Miles, commissioning editor

\*\*Proud to be a Methodist' is the title of a campaign launched by the Methodist Recorder, which celebrates 150 years of publication this year. We are delighted to congratulate the Methodist Recorder – the world's longest-running Methodist newspaper – on this anniversary. A history of the paper, by former assistant editor John Singleton, is available at:

## Wesley Cottage, Trewint

- teve Wild, chair of the Cornwall
- District of the Methodist Church writes: "The Wesley Cottage at Trewint has such a powerful story of Christ's love that the visitors who experience it find it unforgettable. Linking Methodis history and the gospel is an exciting opportunity we seek to exploit."

Now that a curator lives on site, opening hours at Wesley Cottage have



The Prophets Chamber, built in the eighteenth century by Digory Isbell to accommodate John Wesley, has been reorganised to provide a place for prayerful reflection and worship ("In probably the smallest Methodist preaching place in the world", adds Steve).

For visitor information see www.weslevcottage.org.uk.

## Winchelsea Chapel revives Love Feast

on Valentine's Day, 31 people attended a Love Feast led by the Revd Malcolm Hope at Winchelsea Methodist Chapel in East Sussex.

Love feasts used to be a regular Methodist practice, derived from the practice of the earliest Christians to share a simple meal together and follow it with a time of worship. This was revived in the eighteenth century by the Moravians, and John Wesley introduced their Love Feasts to the societies in his care

John Wesley visited the town of Winchelsea on three occasions and preached in Winchelsea Chapel on 29 January 1789. Just around the corner from the chapel stands the 'Wesley Tree', under which John Wesley preached his final open air sermon on 7 October 1790. The original tree was blown down in a gale in 1927; it was replaced in 1931. Every year the Friends of Winchelsea Methodist Chapel celebrate the chapel's anniversary by gathering under the tree to sing hymns and reflect upon the site's history.

Membership of the Freinds is open to anyone with an interest in the building, its history and the local Methodist heritage, for an annual subscription.





## The Methodist Missionary History Project

Medical
nissionaries
with
Chinese
women
and
children,
Wuhan,
China,
ca.1920

by the Revd John R Pritchard, MMH Project Convener

The Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) came into being in 1932 but it had a long prior history. Methodist Union brought together the foreign missions begun by the Wesleyans, Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, Methodist New Connexion and United Methodist Free Churches. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, first-born of these, was officially founded and recognised by the Methodist Conference in 1818, but Wesleyans regarded 1813 as a more significant year.

In October 1813 a great meeting was held in the 'Old Boggard House' in Leeds, where the Leeds District established its Missionary Society – to be swiftly followed by other districts and then the Connexion. The bicentenary of that historic meeting will soon be upon us.

But the history of the society stretches even further back: to the appointment of Thomas Coke as the Methodist Conference's "agent for the foreign missions" in 1798; to Coke's Address to the Pious and Benevolent in 1786; and to 1769, when the Conference first stationed preachers outside the British Isles (sending Boardman and Pilmoor to the American Colonies). It stretches to the first class meeting overseas, gathered by Nathaniel Gilbert in Antigua in 1760. It even stretches back to 1706 when the German missionary to India, Bartholomew Ziegenbald, began writing letters home, which in due course were read by Susannah Wesley and moved her so much that she set about imparting to her growing children her enthusiasm for "missions to the heathen."

Methodism was "forever beginning what never shall end".

In 1973, the MMS became one of the seven divisions of the Church's administration, and became better known as the Methodist Church Overseas Division. In 1996, the seven 'divisions' were merged into a single Connexional Team.

The Methodist Missionary History Project is concerned primarily with the period 1760–1996; though the autonomy of the last remaining overseas district, the Gambia, in 2009, was an important postscript

The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) is a college of the University of London and the only Higher Education institution in the UK specialising in the study of Asia, Africa and the Near and Middle East. In 1978, the SOAS Library accepted on deposit from the Methodist Church the archives and library of the Methodist Missionary Society and its predecessors. The MMS archives hold a wealth of material: correspondence, minutes, reports, magazines and photographs. The SOAS library



continues to take further deposits from the Methodist Church, as well as from individuals who have worked as Methodist missionaries.

At the MMHP annual conferences, held since 2002, many seminal papers have been read; both by distinguished speakers and by less well-known participants researching their particular interests. Two books are currently planned to issue from the project: one by Professor Andrew Wall (now of Liverpool Hope University) and one by the Revd John Pritchard, the project convenor. For more information, visit:

For an overview of the MMS archives at the SOAS, please visit squirrel.soas ac.uk/dserve/ whilst the contents of the MMS Library are available on the SOAS Library catalogue (lib.soas.ac.uk/). If you have any questions regarding these holdings, then please contact the Special Collections team at SOAS Library by email (docenquiry@soas.ac.uk) or by telephone 020 7898 4180.

## Our



Singing the Faith, the brand new authorised Methodist hymn collection, arrives in September. Lawrence Wareing is editor of Singing the Faith Plus, the website that accompanies the new hymn book. Here he looks at the significance of hymns within Methodism's history.

## in hymns

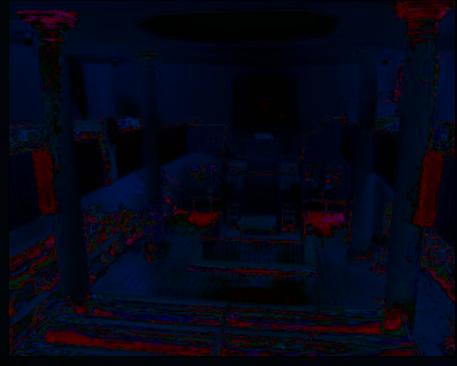
A sk Philip Carter if hymns are as much a part of Methodism's heritage as its historic buildings or events, and his answer is an unequivocal "Yes". As director of music at the New Room in Bristol, it is unsurprising that Philip highlights especially the great quantity of hymns left to us by the Wesley brothers.

That's one reason why Philip has been instrumental in organising a day of celebration to mark the 75th

anniversary of The Hymn Society of Great Britain & Ireland and the launch of *Singing the Faith*, the new hymn book of the Methodist Church in Britain. It's one of a number of events that will mark the publication of the new Methodist hymn book (see 'Dates for your diary' on page 8 for details).

Such events will not only introduce an exciting range of hymns and songs of the past 50 years; they will also bring to life our heritage of hymns from across the centuries. At Manchester's John Rylands Library, many of these hymns can be touched and explored in depth – not least in the hymn collection of John Rylands himself.

Back in Bristol, Philip is excited, too, by plans for a hymnody project at Charles Wesley's house: "Not just a museum," he says, "but an experience that will send visitors away with a sense of deep fulfilment."



The New Room, Briston

## **Changing Wesley's tune**

The echoes and connections between hymns can reveal thought-provoking developments in our sung heritage. When Brian Wren began to write 'Great God, your love has called us here', he wasn't setting out to replace Charles Wesley's 'And can it be'. However, he did believe that there was more to be said about the themes contained in what is, arguably, Methodism's defining anthem.

Written in 1738, two days after his conversion experience, Charles Wesley's '*And can it be*' takes up the biblical story of St Paul and Silas

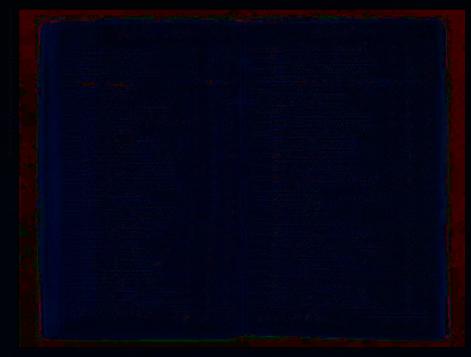
Direct Cylon Bount British

singing and praying in prison. Taking images from that story ("My chains fell off..."), Wesley expresses his awe at divine love and the personal grace Christians may experience despite themselves

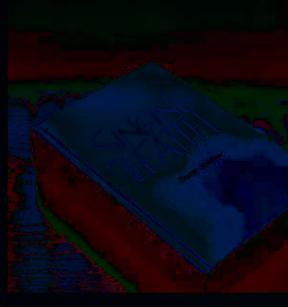
Two centuries later, Wren used Wesley's ideas to help us look beyond personal experience, reinterpreting St Paul's chains as 'social forces' and 'powers and systems'. This is not a social justice hymn, Wren says, but he argues that, as in many of Fred Pratt Green's hymns, our Christian theologis broadened when such issues are addressed.

And there's one other connection between these two fine hymns. Wren's text was written for Erik Routley's popular tune, *Abingdon* – originally composed for '*And Can It Be*'. "In fact," says Wren, "Abingdon fits Wesley's tone and meaning far better than the more usual *Sagina*". Might a change of tune reflect our Methodist heritage with greater sensitivity?

Left: Hymns and Sacred Poems (1742) given to Sarah Gwynne (later wife of Charles Wesley) by her father in 1744, and given to him by John Wesley on 30 June 1742.



Above: Manuscript list of subscribers to Hymns and Sacred Poems (1749)



## Hymns - made for sharing

It's one thing to enthuse about Methodism's heritage of music and sung poetry; it's quite another to help congregations explore that heritage fully and use its gifts with imagination. Often, singers of hymn collections (old and new) use only a relatively small proportion of the hymns, songs and psalms on offer. Yet, for many, what we sing expresses the core of our faith and offers the most evocative memories of our particular Christian heritage.

For that reason, this year the Methodist Church publishes not only its major new hymn collection, *Singing the Faith* but also launches a companion website. *Singing the Faith Plus*.

This will be a tangible acknowledgement that creative expression of faith does not cease simply because a new book has been published.

Not only will www.singingthefaith plus.org.uk host a range of search options to help even the least musical make the most of the new book, it will also offer a growing repository of new material and suggestions; and space to share your hymns and experiences of worship, adding further to our collective Methodist experience. Our heritage in hymns is still in the

# Int



Robert Williams is general secretary of the United Methodis Church's General Commission or Archives & History.

Robert went on his first Wesley Heritage Tour in 1973, and from that experience he developed an interest in the Wesleys' ministry and a desire to be an advocate for the 'ministry of memory'.

After serving as a pastor of local churches, Robert was selected to be the Chief executive for the United Methodist.

Church's agency on archives and history. The agency is based at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, but is responsible for collecting materials for United Methodism around the world. Robert serves as one of the international trustees for the Epworth Old Rectory and has also been an observer at several meetings of the Heritage Committee of the British

Robert Williams guides us through key landmarks in the history of Methodism in the USA...

he United Methodist Church has designated 41 sites in the US as heritage landmarks. Of these, the only sites directly connected with the Wesleys are John Wesley's Savannah Parish and St Simon's Island, Georgia. (This is not to overlook the fact that Charles Wesley did spend a month in Boston.)

There are several places to visit in Savannah. The first is on Cockspur Island, where a marker near the historic Fort Pulaski National Monument notes the arrival of the Wesley brothers on 7 February 1736. In downtown Savannah there are other places of interest, such as the John Wesley.

Statue in Reynolds Square and Christ Episcopal Church on Johnson Square.

St Simon's Island's most striking site is Fort Frederica Near the fort is Christ Episcopal Church, built in 1808 on the



Wesley Monument near Fort Pulaski National Monument

original land granted for church use.

The Wesley Memorial Garden is a two-acre garden of native trees and shrubs across from the entrance to the fort. The United Methodist marker stands adjacent to the garden The old military road along which Wesley walked runs between the church and garden.

The 1760s saw the first preachers and organisers of class meetings in America. These were mainly lay people such as Robert Strawbridge, who is often credited as being the first in Maryland. Strawbridge preached in his log cabin home and began organising Methodist societies as early as 1763 or 1764.



ohn Wesley Statue in Reynolds Square

The first class met in his home and soon a second started meeting in a nearby home. John Evans (1734–1827), one of Strawbridge's converts, led the first class from 1768–1804. These were perhaps the earliest



St George's exterior

Methodist organisations in American history.

Strawbridge's log cabin home was later enlarged and clapboarded; it is this home that visitors can tour. Also part of this heritage landmark is the home of John Evans, a replica of the Strawbridge Log Meetinghouse (built in 1764 and possibly the first Methodist chapel in America) and a statue of Robert Strawbridge.

Around the same time, Philip Embury and Barbara Heck were setting up John Street Church in New York City. The church's current sanctuary, which stands on the original site, dates from 1841 and the interior and furnishings remain much as they were in the mid-nineteenth century. Below the sanctuary, the Wesley Chapel Museum displays artefacts from the eighteenth and nineteenth century American Methodist history of New York City.

is the oldest house of Methodist worship in continuous use in America. In 1767, Captain Thomas Webb, a veteran of the French and Indian War, organised a Methodist Society in Philadelphia. Two years later, the Society bought St George's Church. The church had been built in 1763 as a Dutch Reformed church, but was auctioned when that church was unable to borrow enough money to complete the structure. From 1773 to 1775, St George's hosted the first three Conferences of Methodist preachers in America. Several years later – on 7 November 1784 – Thomas



St George's interio

Coke used the St George's pulpit to explain John Wesley's plan for a new American denomination, just prior to his meeting with Francis Asbury. Coke and Asbury were the first two continued over page

## Methodism comes to A the Bristol Connection

ast year, in my capacity as manager at of the oldest Methodist building in the world, it made a promotional visit to the WSA to raise awareness of the chapes importance as cradle of the Methodist movement and the role it played in the establishment of the American Methodist Charch. Many of the hallmarks of Methodism began in Bristol and then became the template for a movement that crossed the Atlantic from this city.

I gave a series of talks at churches and seminaries in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Ballimore, Washington DC, Chicago and Indianapolis entitled Methodism comes to America: the Bristol Connection. In addition, Lalso highlighted the long-term future development plans for the oligibility today as we believe that

America: by David Worthington (Manager, The New Room/ John Wesley's Chand)

Methodist heritage is a algorificant factor in the ongoing mission of the Church. This belief is most cloquently expressed on a plaque at the National Archives building in Avashington DC which reads. The heritage of the past is the seed that brings forth the harvest of the hune. The delighted to say that the New Room trustees have agreed to me making a return visit this autumn (or fall, if you're an American reader!) to take up those invitations to speak that I was unable to accept last year due to time and geographic limitations. I have over a dozen speaking engagements achedided. As before, I will be keeping a daily log of my visit on the New Room Facebook page. The photos that I take can be viewed by clicking on the link on the homepage of the New Room website: www.ijewroom/sistol.org.iik.



## Lydian Choir concert

A concert in aid of the Epworth Old Rectory

Saturday 17 September, 7:30pm

Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Epworth

## Christmas carol writing competition

Young people are invited to write new words to the tune of Hark! The herald angels sing, or to write a modern tune for the words.

Entrance from age groups only: 7–11 and 12-18. Full details on Epworth Old Rectory website www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk from early September. Closing date: 11 November 2011

## Singing the Faith

## Our Heritage in Hymns

A celebration day to mark the 75th anniversary of The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland and the launch of Singing the Faith.

24 September, 10.00am-6.00pm

## Launch Night

A district celebration of music and song

8 October, 7.00pm-9.00pm

Coventry Central Hall - for further details,

Service of Thanksgiving and Praise
A service to dedicate Singing the Faith
to the praise and glory of God.
21 October, 6.30pm

Wesley's Chapel, London - for further details, contact Suzanne Johnson, tel: 020 7467 5164.

Further information on all these events is also available on: www.singingthefaith.org.uk.

## Gender, Ethnicity and the Methodis Missionary Enterprise

## 2011 Methodist Missionary History Conference

This year's Methodist Missionary History
Conference will have Dr Cathy Ross, general
secretary of the International Association for
Mission Studies, as keynote speaker. Short papers
of about 20 minutes are welcome from those
studying all aspects of Methodist missions.
9–10 November

'Woodbrooke' Quaker Study Centre, Birminghan Email Kirsty.Murray@ed.ac.uk for a full version of the call for papers and a booking form for the Conference. continued from previous page

general superintendents (referred to as bishops from 1787 onwards) for the Methodists in North America. Asbury (originally from near Birmingham, UK) was sent to America by Wesley in 1771 and was the most important figure in American Methodism, serving until his death in 1816. Coke was sent to America by Wesley in 1784 to organise the church and establish an ordained ministry.

Barratt's Chapel is remembered as the meeting place of Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury on 14 November 1784. John Wesley ordained Thomas Coke, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey in September that year, intending that Coke and Asbury would jointly superintend the Methodist work in America. Coke, Whatcoat and Vasey landed in New

York on 3 November. Eleven days later. they were at Barratt's Chapel.

The most important site for the African Methodist Episcopal Church is Mother Bethel Church in Philadelphia. The first building was dedicated in 1794 and the current church still stands on that site. Begun by Richard Allen following a series of racially demeaning incidents at St George's between 1787 and 1792, it was the church that gave rise to the African Methodist Episcopal Church with Richard Allen serving as its first bishop.

Further information about the United Methodist Heritage Landmarks can be found on www. gcah.org. If you click on "Research' in the top menu bar, the left column will then show "Travellers' Guide to Heritage Landmarks."

## Epworth Old Rectory celebrates KJV 400

E pworth Old Rectory is celebrating the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) this year with a new exhibition, 'Bibles, History and You'. The oldest Bibles from the collection are on display, some of them for the first time. Several of them contain generations of family history and the Epworth Team have been able to trace the descendants of some of these families. Among the Bibles is one containing sprigs of heather and shamrock sent back from a soldier in Ireland in 1940. There is also one from 1630 that contains a dedication

stating: "This book once belonged to John Wesley's father, and was saved when the house was on fire and given to Robert Doggett by two aged ladies belonging to the Wesley family in the year 1818 when in London." This is hard to prove, but it remains part of the Bible's history. The exhibition also includes a timeline that helps to put the translations of the Bible into context.

Epworth Old Rectory has participated in the Handwritten Bible Project and is continuing this by creating a handwritter

The deadline for submission of articles for the Spring 2012 newsletter is 14 January 2012. Please send your ideas to: Jo Hibbard, Methodist Heritage Officer, Methodist Church House 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR Tel: 020 7486 5502 Email: hibbardj@methodistchurch.org.uk

You can visit the Methodist Heritage website at:

Heritage News is the bi-annual newsletter of Methodist Heritage, part of the Methodist Church in Britain, a Registered Charity no. 1132208

For more information about what the Christian people called Methodists believe and what the Methodist Church does in Britain and around the world today, visit www.methodist.org.uk.

