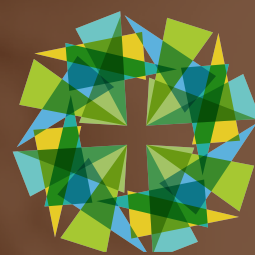
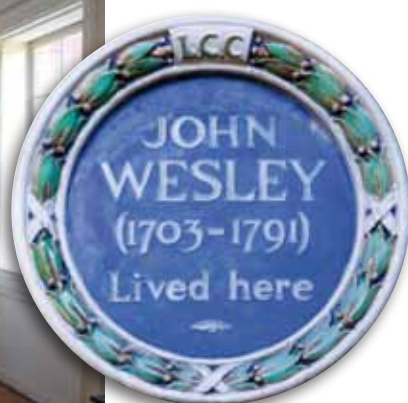


Methodist Heritage News



Spring 2012



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Shh... can you keep a secret?

Christian Dettlaff, curator at Wesley's Chapel in London, hopes not! John Wesley's House has joined **London's Small Historic House Association** (aka London Shh...); a group of 12 historic London homes that have all remained a rather too well-kept secret (until now) and Christian is keen to help promote them. The famous residents of these beautiful, often tucked-away, houses lived and worked in London between 1700 and 1950 and, as well as John Wesley, included Handel, Dr Johnson, Benjamin Franklin, Keats and Freud.

Christian Dettlaff told *Heritage News*: "Being part of London Shh... is an excellent way of raising awareness of John Wesley's life and his eighteenth-century townhouse. It is a great opportunity to help diversify our audience and to tempt in those who might not necessarily have thought of visiting."

For Shh... members, the group provides an excellent promotion and marketing platform, with a dedicated website

www.londonshh.org on which all of the houses have an individual presence. Recently they have set up a Facebook page and a Twitter account. The house curators and managers meet regularly to discuss heritage and museum trends and challenges, and to plan shared ventures such as a trail around all the houses for summer 2012. At the end of the year John Wesley's House and Chapel will take their turn to host a joint event with a fundraising carol concert for the group. Shh... spread the word!

London Shh...
Small historic houses





Editorial

As our commissioning editor John Miles has turned contributor with a final salute to the Year of the Bible (p.6), he has asked me to introduce this newsletter.

Increased collaboration is a key aim for Methodist Heritage, but not just between our sites and archives. Our cover story features John Wesley's House on City Road, which has recently joined London Shh... – a group of 12 properties that tell the stories of prominent Londoners.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome several 'new' faces to the Methodist Heritage team (see p.3)! I can also announce that the Methodist Council has appointed a new chair for the Heritage Committee, Sarah Friswell. Sarah will be introducing herself in the next newsletter.

Also in this edition, we are showcasing a number of long-standing Methodist institutions and projects that may well be 'new' to many of our readers – some of the hidden treasure of Methodist history and research: documentary collections, railway chapels and recorded memories. Did you know Methodism has its own online, wiki-style, research resource?

Jo Hibbard, Methodist Heritage Officer



The online *Dictionary of Methodism*: over 3,300 entries and growing

Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland (Epworth Press) was published in 2000. Within a volume of just over 400 pages and 1,500 entries, the emphasis in drafting entries was on being concise and had to be very selective, but the published volume met a real need. It was a new venture in providing basic information on the Methodist Church from its eighteenth-century beginnings. Inevitably the main focus was on the original Wesleyan tradition, but an effort was made to cover non-Wesleyan denominations as well.

However, something more comprehensive was clearly desirable and an online version was soon being planned, with the approval of Methodist Publishing House.

Online, the original entries have been expanded by adding sources of further information, and have been increased to well over 3,300, including many on individual Methodists and families. The main emphasis has been on including outstanding lay women as well as men, especially those remembered for their involvement in national or local society: industrialists, political figures, scholars and authors, educationalists, doctors and nurses (including missionaries overseas).

Outline histories of Methodism in particular towns have proved more difficult to obtain. Many gaps remain and offers to fill some of these would be especially welcome.

Efforts are being made to keep the online dictionary up to date. Entries on presidents and vice-presidents of the Conference and the effects of ongoing restructuring are added on a five-yearly basis. We have also begun to add portraits, illustrations and quotations relating to particular entries.

More importantly, the means of finding information have become much more sophisticated. The cross-referencing of the original dictionary is reinforced by hyperlinks between related entries. A search of the entire dictionary can be made for specific names or other key words. Lists of occupational groups (eg architects, farmers) can be called up. There is also provision for corrections or other comments by anyone using the dictionary, which are very much welcomed.

The online dictionary is hosted by the Wesley Historical Society: www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/dmbi (and a link can be found on the Methodist Heritage website). If you expect to use it frequently, designate it as one of your 'favourites'. It is available without charge. Do visit us.

John A Vickers, Editor,
Dictionary of Methodism



New faces

The 2010 Methodist Conference agreed to a number of proposals to support the conservation of, and increased access to, the archives of the Methodist Church, alongside its built heritage. The voluntary role of the Church's advisor on record management was redefined and a second voluntary role identified to support our regional archivists across the Connexion.



Philip Thornborow will be providing strategic advice and guidance documents for

the Connexion, and more specific advice for the Connexional Team:

I have over 30 years' experience of library and records management, with degrees in Librarianship, Records Management, Geography and English Local History. I am a 'cradle' Methodist; the son and husband of local preachers. I have held office at all levels of the Church.

Between 2007 and 2009, I was the connexional archives liaison officer, advising the Church and external enquirers and coordinating the district archivists. The new role of liaison officer for Methodist archives has an increased emphasis on the use of the Church's archives as a tool for mission, and I am looking forward to encouraging much more promotion of Methodist records, including the many documents freely available online. I want to encourage the use of records in all forms – written, spoken, visual, and architectural – and at every level of the Church. The main expression of Methodism is its people, and the current interest in family history is a wonderful opportunity to tell our story. I am writing a book to aid family historians with Methodist connections.



James Darby was appointed in August 2011 as coordinator of the Connexional Archivists'

Network. You can contact James at archives1@methodistchurch.org.uk:

With both a Methodist and a professional archiving background, my role is to support circuit and district archivists and facilitate our relationship with institutions that hold important Methodist archive collections, such as the John Rylands University Library in Manchester and the library at SOAS (the School of Oriental and African Studies) at the University of London.

I am developing the content for the archives and research sections of the Methodist Heritage website; the pages will be ready shortly.

In October 2011, we held the first Methodist Archivists Network meeting at Wesley's Chapel in London. With 50 archivists from across the UK, we celebrated the importance of the role of our local archivists and provided practical advice. The meeting included sessions on digital preservation, guidance on best practice for storing paper records and opportunities to share ideas and concerns with other local archivists and archive professionals. The next meeting will be in Manchester in June.



A new project director for Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism

Dr Jill Barber introduces herself:

From Hertfordshire, where I was head of heritage services, it is an exciting time to arrive at Englesea Brook.

I am enormously impressed by the committed band of staff and volunteers who reach 5,000 school children a year. New Saturday talks and activities will link to our stunning collections of banners, pottery, magic lantern slides and James Bourne's printing press! With about 7,000 books and 3,000 objects, increasing access is crucial and I am delighted that you can now see 105 banners and oil paintings at www.bbc.co.uk/yourpaintings.

I am passionate about using heritage to engage in mission, as it provides a perspective which can help people engage with faith issues in a non-threatening way. Englesea Brook recently featured in the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are* magazine. To build on this interest, we are planning a community archive and family history day titled *My Ancestor was a Primitive Methodist*.

As well as engaging with people outside the Church, I am excited by the potential of heritage to spark and inspire spiritual growth within faith communities.

In June 2012, the Methodist Conference will be meeting in Plymouth. Colin Short, Methodist minister and Bible Christian enthusiast, introduces

A West Country sort of Methodist

The Bible Chris

My grandmother lived from the 1890s to the 1980s – and thought herself a Bible Christian until she died. Yet in 1907 the Bible Christians merged with two other small branches of Methodism to form the United Methodist Church; she and her contemporaries “belonged to be” Bible Christians.

In my early teens I asked, “Who were the Bible Christians?” and was told, “They’re a West Country sort of Methodism.” For all its vagueness, that is the answer. They were most certainly Methodist in their principles and practice, and their early name was Arminian Bible Christians. They had pastors instead of superintendents, and elders’ meetings instead of leaders’ meetings. But what’s in a name? There were the lady ministers... well, yes – they were pioneers there. By and large their strength was in the West Country, mostly in rural communities. Yet they were no intellectual sluggards; Sam Pollard (1864–1915), one of the second pair of Bible Christian missionaries to go to China, was the only Methodist minister to invent a script to create a written language out of a purely spoken one (Miao). And when, in 1907, they merged with the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Churches, they were the fastest growing branch of British Methodism – a pity no one at the time asked, why?

BUT THREE LEADERS

The Bible Christians had but three ‘leaders’ in their 92-year life. They began as a revivalist movement under the charismatic evangelism of **William O’Bryan** – rejected Wesleyan ministerial candidate, twice an expelled Wesleyan, and self-expelled a third time in 1815 from the Stratton Mission in north Devon. Better at keeping his own rules than observing others’, and incapable of coping with the inevitable as the Bible Christian movement evolved from a missionary community into an institutional

church, O’Bryan was a flawed human being. When crises came to a boil in 1829, he separated and formed his own breakaway Bible Christians. Yet he could not sustain them; in 1831 he emigrated to America and his breakaway group rejoined the Bible Christians in 1835.

By then **James Thorne** (1795–1872) held the reins. He was the son of the family from Shebbear in rural north Devon, where O’Bryan had founded his first new society. Thorne was the father figure needed after O’Bryan’s

hot-headed enthusiasm, and under his sure footed guidance from 1830, the movement consolidated its position and completed the evolution into a connexional church.

Frederick William Bourne (1830–1905) was a man of Kent – one early area of Bible Christian expansion. From his first connexional office in 1860, he became the movement’s guide and spokesman, and steered them towards the 1907 union. He would have graced – and held high office in – any Church.

m



tians: 1815-1907

THE LADY MINISTERS

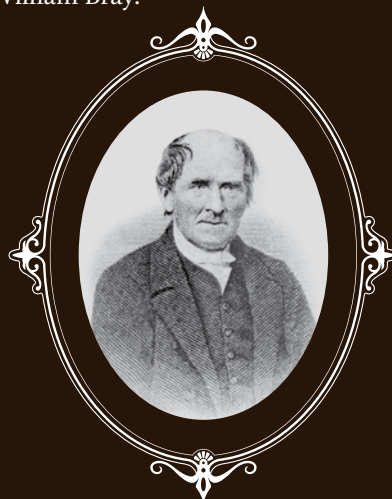
From the start, the Bible Christians used lady ministers, including William O'Bryan's wife Catherine, and his daughter Mary, who married Samuel Thorne. Mary's tombstone at Shebbear records her status as "a minister 60 years". The Bible Christians were well aware of the appeal of female ministers and William O'Bryan used them as pioneer evangelists. Mary Ann Werrey from near Looe filled that role in her late 20s in the Channel Islands, on Scilly and in the north of Northumberland. She travelled further north and preached in Edinburgh, although with that we lose sight of her.

The lady ministers were in theory not supposed to be leaders, nor to rule circuits, yet when a lady minister was the only minister in a circuit, who else did the job? Such was their final lady minister, Lillie Edwards, who was stationed at Hastings when the 1907 union came about. Lady ministers were not in the polity of the United Methodist Church, so Lillie Edwards was relegated to 'Special Agent'. Yet there is evidence that she just continued to do the job – and be paid for it – until she retired a few years later.

BILLY BRAY

The best known Bible Christian is Billy Bray (1794–1868), whose fame is based on his biography by F W Bourne, called *The King's Son* – his own title for himself. From central Cornwall, Billy was by no means a typical Bible Christian, although his eccentric preaching and child-like trust in God were perhaps an extreme example of an ethos within the Church. He was responsible for building six chapels; just one remains, commonly known as Three Eyes on Kerley Downs near Truro.

Billy was a local preacher and should never be confused with the two Bible Christian ministers called William Bray.



BILLY BRAY (1794–1868)

SOME OF THEIR CHAPELS

The Bible Christians' 'cathedral' in the west was their 1903 Embankment Road Chapel, Plymouth (since 1982, the Elim Church's Plymouth Christian Centre: SX 4903 5438). 'Home' was always Shebbear Chapel, in north Devon, and still worth visiting for the graveyard of Bible Christian worthies alone (SS 4474 0939). Four small chapels in Cornwall represent typical rural practice. Three feature in the *Methodist Heritage Handbook*: Billy Bray's Three Eyes Chapel (SW 7647 4370); Innis (SX 0263 6217); and Penrose (SW 8753 7077; cared for by the Historic Chapels Trust). In addition, do seek out Wheal Busy Chapel (SW 7384 4523).

The Conference was held four times (1831, 1851, 1861 & 1871) at Hicks Mill Chapel (SW 7665 4108), and it met twice (1890 & 1900) at Penzance High Street (SW 4719 3044) in an elegant balconied chapel. Innis, Hick's Mill and High Street continue as worshipping Methodist congregations.

(Locations are given as eight-figure OS Landranger map references.)

What is 26 miles long, mountainous, and connected with the Year of the Bible and Methodism?

This is not a question from *Brain of Britain*, *the Round Britain Quiz* or *Mastermind*. The answer lies in north Wales, near Dolgellau, where the 26-mile Mary Jones Trail begins.

Mary was born in north Wales in 1784, the daughter of a weaver. Her family were Calvinistic Methodists and Mary herself became a Christian at the age of eight. She had learnt to read in Welsh and used to walk two miles every week in order to read the Bible at a farmhouse – the only local place with one. She desperately wanted her own Bible in her own language, so she saved up for six years. In 1800, once she had enough money, she walked the 26 miles to Bala where someone had said she *might* be able to buy a Bible. There she went to the house of the Methodist minister, Thomas Charles – the one person with Bibles.

Here, the story varies. One version says that Thomas Charles'

Bibles were all spoken for, but he was so impressed that he sold Mary one. Another version says that he had just sold his last Bible to a man who still happened to be there.

Whichever version is correct, Mary's impact was such that the Methodist minister, prompted by the belief that everyone ought to be able to have a Bible, proposed the beginning of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), now known simply as the Bible Society.

Last October, my wife and I walked part of the Mary Jones Trail from near Llanuwchllyn to Bala. We felt that 2011 – the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible – was an appropriate time to do so. It was less than four miles, but we certainly knew we had walked it! The terrain was varied, with a little road walking, but mostly on mountainside. The uphill parts were very steep and challenging in places – and we are used to rambling! The weather was glorious, providing some

compensation for tired legs, but we did arrive in Bala and visited sites connected with the story. Mary's story is an inspiration to us, and we are proud of its Methodist connection.

John Miles, Commissioning Editor



A statue of the Revd Thomas Charles (1755-1814) in front of the Tegid Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Bala, Gwynedd, Wales.



Railways & Religion Trail

“The work was hard/And the work was tough/They had mud in their boots/And their hands were rough...” The Ballad of the Ravenstonedale Navvy

Railways & Religion in the Western Dales is an innovative new faith trail developed by the Churches Trust for Cumbria in partnership with the Cumbria Methodist District and others, focusing on the places of worship associated with the railways of Cumbria, including the famous Settle–Carlisle line.

The Revd Richard Teal, chair of the Cumbria District, said of this ecumenical project: “Churches and chapels that have been open only for worship on Sundays are now going to be open each day of the week, to welcome people in and share the fascinating railway and Christian story of the area ... to offer peace and space and allow the atmosphere of years of prayer and worship to help people on their Christian journeys.”

Download the trail from the Methodist Heritage website, or order hard copies via the Methodist Heritage Officer or Churches Trust for Cumbria: www.ctfc.org.uk

Recorded Lives: The Methodist Church Oral History Project

Oral history is an increasingly popular way of archiving contemporary memories, and the Methodist Church has been involved in it for over 40 years.

Since the 1960s there has been a growing, if spasmodic, interest among Methodists in oral history as a means of supplementing the historical record of Methodism. Then in 1980, the Methodist Conference signed an historic legal agreement with the National Institute of Recorded Sound, now the National Sound Archive based at the British Library (BL) in London, for the creation of a Methodist Church Sound Archive. These collections, relating to a wide variety of aspects of Methodist history, may be accessed freely by anyone who is interested in researching recent Methodist history (except for those recordings deposited on restricted access). Visit the *BL Help for Researchers* web pages and access the catalogues via www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/sound/ohist/ohcoll/ohrelig/religion.html.

An ongoing project to interview former Methodist missionaries was inaugurated in 1969. Currently coordinated by Peter Watkinson, it has provided a valuable resource for the preparation of a new history being published to commemorate the bicentenary of the Methodist contribution to overseas mission.

Dr John A Hargreaves, Methodist Church coordinator for oral history, has coordinated the parallel Methodist Church Oral History Project since 2006. This project aims



Lord Soper of Kingsway
'Open Air Witness'
addressing the public at
Speakers' Corner, Hyde
Park, London 1979.

to record the experience of Methodists primarily engaged in the home mission movement within Britain. These recordings provide inspirational and potentially transformational testimonies of faith, and the life circumstances in which faith commitment was stimulated, nurtured, expressed and shared.

By definition oral history is contemporary, starting with the here and now and providing a useful springboard for historical exploration. The project has contributors living today with vivid memories stretching back to the depression of the interwar years. One interviewee recalled how his father served on an engineering trade union railway works committee in Crewe comprising, in more-or-less equal numbers, both Primitive Methodists and Communists. Another recalled how a bomb caused extensive damage to a chapel in Putney during the London Blitz, preventing the congregation from returning to worship in the building until 1956. Other testimonies recall the changing pattern and scale of youth work in response to the cultural revolution of the 1960s, the development of women's ministries, industrial mission, ecumenical experiment and, charismatic renewal, and the

challenges of witness in an increasingly multi-ethnic society.

In essence, oral history is a reflective process; one which seeks to understand the past through dialogue with the present. It can access a variety of authentic voices and experiences, confirming that there are many Methodisms shaped by different cultural, economic, social and regional contexts. Methodist itinerancy has often resulted in many older ministers gaining a remarkably wide variety of insights into Methodism in many different places, while the continuity of witness in particular places is characteristic of many lay people's devoted service to the life of the local church.

Oral history can focus, in a refreshingly meaningful way, on life-changing experiences and can capture the vitality of personal faith and the dynamic of Christian community life. It is a valuable source for understanding the recent past, especially given the ephemeral nature of much inter-personal communication today.

If you are willing to be interviewed for the project or wish to know more about it contact Dr Hargreaves at 7 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax HX13AH, or email: johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk.

Dates for your diary...

Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History events

Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill
Oxford OX2 9AT. Visit www.history.brookes.ac.uk/research/centres/ocmch

Saturday 21 April, Seminar in 'Wesley and Methodist Studies' [at Oxford]

Thursday 24 May, 5.00pm, John Wesley Lecture, Prof Isabel Rivers – Lincoln College, Oxford

Wednesday 20 June, 3.00pm, Ecclesiastical History Colloquium: Profs J C D Clarke and Callum Brown will discuss secularisation

Primitive Physic – a travelling exhibition

Some of John Wesley's ideas for curing 'dis-ease' of body and soul relate well to modern advice on healthy living and to Olympic ideals.

View this fascinating display at:

2–27 April: Epworth Old Rectory, Lincolnshire

30 April–24 May: The New Room/John Wesley's Chapel, Bristol

25 May–22 June: Wesley Cottage, Trewint, Launceston, Cornwall

25 June–20 July: Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum of Primitive Methodism, near Crewe

23 July–23 August: John Wesley's City Road Chapel, House & Museum, London

24 August–30 September: Brunswick Methodist Church & Holy Biscuit Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne

Wesley Historical Society AGM and Annual Lecture

Past and Present: Taking the long view of Methodist and Anglican History. Professor John Wolffe, Open University, on church growth and decline in nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Saturday 30 June, 10.30am–4.00pm, The New Room/John Wesley's Chapel, Bristol

Further details: Dr John A Hargreaves, 7 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax HX1 3AH
Email: johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk

Methodist Archivists' Network Meeting

Saturday 16 June, 10.30am–4.00pm, John Rylands Library, 150 Deansgate, Manchester

Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History

Professor Jeremy Gregory (University of Manchester) commented in the December 2011 issue of the *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, referring to the Centre for Methodism and Church History at Oxford Brookes University (OCMCH):

"Further evidence of the renewed centrality of eighteenth-century religion to a variety of academic disciplines is provided by a number of UK centres recently established to foster research in the subject. ... these developments have helped to make the study of religion central to those who work outside the field of 'Church History' as traditionally conceived. In 2011, the place of religion in the long eighteenth century looks far more vital than it did in 1978."

The OCMCH holds 12 'special collections' including the Wesley Historical Society library, the extensive Westminster College archive, the records of the AVEC consultancy and the papers of the Revd Donald English. The Methodist Church's outstanding Collection of Modern Art is also based at the centre.

Dr Peter Forsaith, research fellow, gives a snapshot of the centre's work from the past 12 months: "First, there was the publication (by Wipf & Stock, USA, 2011, and James Clarke, UK, 2012) of selected papers on the lives and work of John and Mary Fletcher and their circles from the very successful conference held in Shropshire in 2009, *Religion, Gender and Industry: Exploring Church and Methodism in a Local Setting*. Both the conference and book were

collaborations with the Manchester Wesley Research Centre at the Nazarene Theological College.

"Professor Bill Gibson, director of the centre, spoke on 'Samuel Johnson's Churchmanship' at the Huntington Library conference in September 2011 and I gave the opening presentation at the Wesley Historical Society conference in May. Both of us travelled to the USA; in April Professor Gibson was visiting fellow at the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, and I travelled to Duke University in North Carolina for the Wesley Summer Seminar and the Charles Wesley Society Annual Meeting.

"The annual John Wesley Lecture was given by Professor David Hempton. In late June, I spoke at the Ecclesiastical History Colloquium on the theme of the visual and spiritual with *A Sense of Self: Portraits and Evangelical Identity*, alongside Dr Albrecht Geck (University of Osnabruck) on Church and cultural history as reflected in portraits of Martin Luther, and Dr Nigel Aston (University of Leicester) on eighteenth-century High Church religious art and religiosity. It is planned to hold a conference on evangelicalism and culture, possibly in 2013.

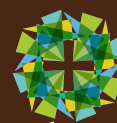
"Finally, there have been six exhibitions in 2011 of the full Modern Art Collection and a selection of the works was displayed at the Greenbelt festival over August Bank Holiday weekend, which were viewed by about 7,000 people."

The deadline for submission of articles for the Autumn 2012 newsletter is 7 July 2012.

Please send your ideas to: **Jo Hibbard, Methodist Heritage Officer, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR** Tel: 020 7467 5257 Email: hibbardj@methodistchurch.org.uk
You can visit the Methodist Heritage website at: www.methodistheritage.org.uk

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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.



Methodist
Heritage

The Methodist Church