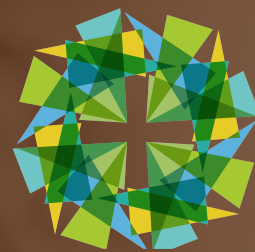


Methodist Heritage News



Spring 2013

A connexional celebration

The year 1813 is widely recognised as pivotal to Methodist mission overseas. It did not see the start of Methodist missions overseas; that can be dated from 1760, when Nathaniel Gilbert arrived home in Antigua from London and began to preach to the slaves on his estate. Neither did 1813 see the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. That was in 1818, when the Conference created a committee to oversee missionary work and appointed three ministerial secretaries. But 1813 came at the end of a long series of attempts, instigated by Thomas Coke, to create a framework of support for workers in the overseas mission field, and it began that final process leading to 1818 and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

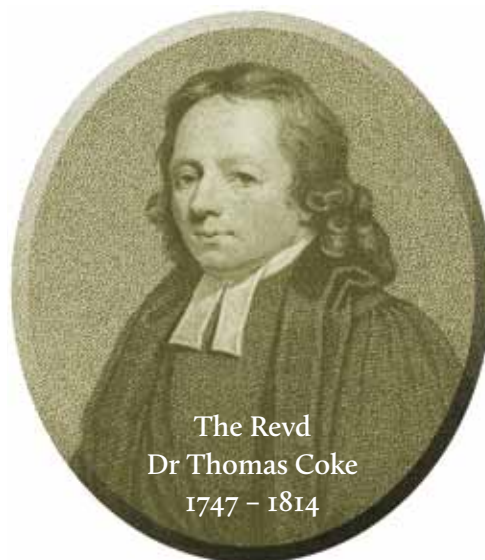
The organisation of missionary work had been, since at least 1783, largely the work of one man, Thomas Coke. In July 1813 the Conference granted his wish to lead a mission to Ceylon. Supporters of missions had long been aware that, despite the Conference giving official backing to Coke's efforts in 1786, Methodism was in practice dependent upon on Coke personally for fundraising and personal donations. They were also aware of how other denominations had in the meantime set up their own societies to support missions – the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen (1792); the London Missionary Society (1794) and the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, later known as the Church Missionary Society (1799). The London Missionary Society in particular, as a non-denominational, evangelical (though predominantly Congregational) society, could appear a threat to Methodist fundraising efforts.

Partly for this reason, and partly to fill the void left by Coke's imminent departure,

the superintendent of the Leeds Circuit, George Morley, proposed holding the first missionary meeting – indeed the first-ever Methodist public meeting called for any purpose other than worship and prayer.

It was held at the Old Chapel (known as the Boggard House) in Leeds on 6 October 1813, chaired by the Hull banker Thomas Thompson.

Continued on page 2



The Revd
Dr Thomas Coke
1747 – 1814

In this issue

PAGE 2

Editorial

A connexional celebration
continued

PAGE 3

A meeting of minds

PAGES 4 & 5

A new beginning

PAGE 6

Octagonal Methodist
chapels

PAGE 7

Supporting Haiti through
missionary history

PAGE 8

My Primitive Methodist
Ancestors

Dates for your diary



Editorial

During the British Methodist Conference last July, I was invited by the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), Bishop Zipho Siwa, to contribute to the MCSA's 'Heritage Indaba' in Durban in August, and then to stay on to represent the British Methodist Church during the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Wesleyan Mission to the Indian community in Natal. The dilemma of the MCSA over what should be conserved and why from the faith heritage of six countries from 200 years of mission brought home to me how we may take for granted the culture and opportunity in Britain to preserve our heritage. In this edition of *Heritage News* we present, once again, a wide range of initiatives from across Methodist Heritage – and all are using that heritage for mission. Our new online community archives are encouraging people to consider the impact of faith in their family trees, while the new museum at Wesley's Chapel is taking shape to reach out to new audiences with our story. Find out why John Wesley preferred the octagonal design for his preaching houses, and thought them most effective for mission. One of the oldest, Yarm, will be celebrating 250 years of mission in 2013. Our cover story, and another cause for celebration in 2013, is the bicentenary of the inauguration of the Leeds District Methodist Missionary Society – the 'foundation stone' of the Methodist Missionary Society and of outreach and partnership in mission by Methodist people worldwide. A mission which we continue today through our worldwide heritage.

Jo Hibbard, Methodist Heritage Officer

Thompson was later to become the first lay treasurer of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. But the most energetic spirit was a young minister newly arrived in the Leeds Circuit from Halifax, Jabez Bunting. Thanks largely to him, the meeting led to the formation of the Leeds District Missionary Society. This was soon to be followed by similar societies in Halifax, York, Sheffield, Cornwall and Newcastle. In 1814, the Conference (with Bunting as secretary) welcomed this initiative and commended it to the Connexion as a whole.

Thus 1813 came to be seen as the formative date in the creation of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, the jubilee of which was celebrated in 1863 and the centenary in 1913. So it is fitting that the Leeds District should be organising on Sunday 6 October 2013 a commemoration of these events, with a commemorative act on the site of the Old Chapel in Leeds followed by a special service in the nearby Leeds Minster, attended by the president, other connexional officers and as many other friends as are able to come.

There will also be the public launch of the newest official history of *Methodists and their Missionary Societies*, which deals with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The author, the Revd John Pritchard, is a former missionary and secretary at Mission House.

The same weekend (5-6 October), the annual conference of the Methodist Missionary History Project will be held at Hinsley Hall (the former Headingley College) in Leeds: 200 Years of Mission. Spaces (especially residential spaces) are limited, so bookings should be made urgently. For further details, email JRPritchard@aol.com or call 01273 845553.

Below: The Old Wesleyan Chapel on St Peter's Street: Wesleyans in Leeds had worshipped in the house of Robert Chippendale until a chapel, known as Boggard House, was completed in 1751, with John Wesley preaching the first sermon on 14 May. This church was replaced by St Peter's Wesleyan Chapel in 1834, built on the same site. The chapel closed in 1909.



Right: Front page of the report of the meeting at which the Leeds District MMS was formed.



A meeting of minds

The MCSA Heritage Indaba and 150 years of the Methodist Indian Mission in Natal



‘Indaba’ is a traditional form of African problem-solving, where everyone has a voice and attempts to find a common story. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa’s Heritage Indaba or ‘meeting of minds’ in August 2012 was convened in response to the call in 2008 by the former presiding bishop, the Revd Ivan Abrahams (now general secretary of the World Methodist Council), for the MCSA to build on its heritage and affirm the contribution of those who built the Methodist witness in Southern Africa. The Heritage Indaba took as its theme *Learning from the past, moving to the future*. Its stated purpose was “to reclaim, recapture and celebrate our history, heritage and legacy”.

In his introductory remarks, Presiding Bishop Zipho Siwa spoke about the Indaba as “a step towards healing and transformation, which is the vision of MCSA” and of the importance of the heritage of Southern African Methodists in maintaining and building up the Church community, in acknowledging the works of God in the past, and in recognising ways that should never be travelled again: “a journey of appreciation and pain; of restoration and re-energising.”

The overall output of the MCSA’s focus on heritage is to be a Methodist Development Foundation.

Acknowledging that they come from a story-telling tradition, the MCSA general secretary, the Revd Vido Nyobole, introduced the bishops and other representatives of each of the six countries/twelve districts of the MCSA participating in the Indaba – Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland – to tell the story of their evangelisation and Methodist growth. Representatives of the Anglican Church and the National Heritage Council (NHC) also gave addresses. Advocate Sonwabile Mancotywa, CEO of the NHC,

spoke about the national challenges in preserving Southern African heritage, and particularly resisting the tendency towards selectivity. “Victors and victims tell different histories,” he said. Jo Hibbard, Methodist heritage officer, presented an overview of the development of ‘Methodist Heritage and Contemporary Mission’ in Britain, focussing on the theology of heritage as mission, the developments at key Methodist heritage sites, and the current strategic direction of the Methodist Heritage Committee.

At the end of the Indaba, the conference representatives made a day-long visit into the more rural regions and suburbs around Durban to three historical attractions (the King Shaka Museum, Chief Albert Luthuli’s House and Ghandi’s Settlement), with lavish refreshments provided at two long-standing Methodist societies in the coloured community, Stranger and Sparks Estate.

The Indaba was followed by a dinner and celebration service to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Indian Mission in Natal. Jo Hibbard spoke during the cultural evening that followed the meal, taking the first Wesleyan missionary

to Natal in 1862, the Revd Ralph Stott, as her subject. She had accessed Ralph’s first letters and Synod reports from the SOAS Library, so was able to allow Ralph to tell his story in his own words, giving his first impressions of Durban and his concerns in preaching to the Indian indentured workforce on the plantations.

Jo reported: “The MCSA’s welcome was warm and their hospitality generous at every level. I pray my contribution was of value, but I was challenged and benefitted too. Any heritage inspired project undertaken in Southern Africa will need to provide robust and much wider mission outcomes if it is to be progressed and invested in by the MCSA. I believe increasingly that this is an issue of key significance for British Methodist Heritage; especially as the non-heritage aspects of our projects are also likely to be the financially sustaining part of the work.”

Photos: Top left: Dr GK Nair presents his book Celebrate: Indian Christians in South Africa, 1860-2010 to Jo Hibbard after the 150th anniversary service.

Top right: Verulam Methodist Church ruins and bell (1853, the oldest in South East Africa).

The Revd Dr the Lord Leslie Griffiths and the Revd Jennifer Potter, ministers at Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London, update us on progress towards refurbishing the museum in the crypt...

A new beginning



The Museum of Methodism was first opened in 1984 and has done worthy service, but it now looks tired, 'denominational' and cluttered. It needs a complete revamp, so that the story it tells can reach a much wider audience. But plans to refurbish it ran 'smack bang' into the global recession and we had to delay taking the project forward.

A visit to Seoul, South Korea, in the autumn of 2011 changed all that. The Kwanglim Methodist Church (with 85,000 members, surely the largest in the world) gave us a love gift of \$1,000,000 as part of a complex programme to develop our relationship further. This money encouraged us to go out into the market and we have, at the time of writing, almost doubled our money. The first phase of our project can now be undertaken and paid for. And, wonder of wonders, we remain open for business and our welcome to visitors remains warm and inviting.



The Museum of Methodism tells the history of Methodism from John Wesley to the present day and its contribution to shaping Britain's political and social history.



Once in a lifetime!

A museum refurbishment is not to be taken in hand lightly. If you do it; keep calm, carry on and ensure it is only once in your lifetime!

Planning, photographing, cataloguing, packing, storing and moving objects (while retaining access to the essential ones) and keeping the visitor experience going; this requires energy and help from lots of volunteers. Where wordy display boards dominated the 1980s museum, it is intended that our objects and artworks will be at the heart of the new exhibition. And while all that is going on, the daily work of the museum still has to go on.

In the case of the Museum of Methodism, our tight time schedule for the completion of the main structural work and the audio-visual (AV) presentation has meant regular – almost weekly – meetings with our consultants, Barker Langham. Our aim is to open phase 1 for Wesley Day, 24 May 2013.

Left: Oblique view into the proposed museum space. The four central walls will enclose the AV wall.

Below, left: The shop fittings are loaded into a trailer to be relocated to Epworth Old Rectory.

Below, centre & right: The museum is now cleared to be a blank canvas for the refit.



An artist's impression of how the refurbished museum space will appear.



Audience development: increasing our local impact

How times change! When the Museum of Methodism was first set up, it was designed primarily with Methodists in mind – from Britain and overseas, especially America. In recent years, we have come to realise that our audience is more varied. There is an increasing emphasis on engaging local people, and we are accessing wider audiences by collaborating with other nearby museums, historic houses and architecturally-significant churches, contributing to telling the story of this part of London from the eighteenth century.

So we cannot assume anything. Our exhibition and AV presentation has to be accessible to non-Methodists, people of other faiths and none, to people with little or no English, and to people who come with other special interests. This is a challenge – a very considerable challenge!

The new Museum of Methodism will reinforce the message preached week by week in the Chapel. It will extend our reach into communities and audiences as yet untouched. It will be a powerful tool to enhance the mission of the Church.

Finance

As well as Kwanglim's generous support, the Methodist Church's Connexional Grants Committee and the London District have agreed to support our scheme with grants. So too have the Jerusalem, All Churches, and Laing Trusts. We have applications outstanding with eight other grant-making trusts. Phase 1 (construction & AV) is paid for, but Phase 2 (most of the exhibition display) will need a further £350,000, and will only be implemented as funds allow.

Octagonal Methodist chapels

“No corners for the devil to hide in”

The oldest known octagonal building is the ‘Tower of Winds’ in Athens, dating from 300BC. A number of Methodism’s older eighteenth-century churches, among its hundreds of ‘listed’ chapels, are octagonal. Originally these buildings were built as effective preaching houses for the mission of Methodism; the shape was not chosen for its architectural value. It is thought that these buildings may well have been constructed as meeting houses for worship to avoid conflict with the buildings of the established Church.

John Wesley’s preferred design

Wesley had a preference for the octagonal shape; the legacy of this preference can still be seen in Methodism in Yarm (built in 1763), Heptonstall (1764), and Arbroath (1772). Heptonstall and Yarm were built within months of each other, but Yarm is a regular octagon, with all sides being equal, while Heptonstall is irregular in shape with two elongated sides.

During his travels in 1757 John Wesley was impressed by Norwich Unitarian Octagonal Chapel (today still in use as a Grade II listed Unitarian church). They describe their chapel’s shape as having “no corners... distant from the pulpit”. Wesley described it as, “the most elegant of buildings” (a comment he also made in reference to Yarm). He declared the design to be “better for the voice and more commodious than any other”. Consequently, 14 octagonal Methodist churches were built. Of these the earliest ones were in Whitby, Rotherham and Thirsk.



Heptonstall Octagonal Chapel

Yarm celebrates 250 years of continuous worship in 2013

The oldest surviving octagon still in full use for regular Methodist worship is at Yarm. It was visited by John Wesley 18 times, his final visit being on his 72nd birthday.

Building commenced in June 1763, on land purchased by a local merchant, George Merryweather, at whose house Mr Wesley stayed during his visits. It was built on the Tees riverside, down a busy ‘wynd’ frequented by users of the port. Services were held from Christmastime in 1763, but the date of the official opening by Peter Jaco is unknown. This new Preaching House could hold a congregation of 150. Wesley’s journal entry for 24 April 1764 records:

“I preached at noon at Potto and in the evening at Yarm – by far the most elegant in England. A large congregation attended at five in the morning and seemed to be just right for exhortation. Let us go on to perfection.”

Support for the Yarm society grew steadily and to accommodate this the roof was removed, a new gallery with internal staircases was added, and the roof replaced. The new church, holding 350, was opened by the president of the 1816 Conference, the Revd Richard Reece.

Other structural changes over time have included an



A model of the 1763 Yarm Octagonal Church



Yarm Octagonal Church (1963)

‘unsympathetic’ white brick porch with external staircases in 1873; the church hall in 1892, and an organ and choir loft in 1896, fashioned by piercing one of the octagon walls.

In 1963, the Primitive Methodist and Yarm Wesley churches amalgamated, creating a new Society. This time the ugly porch was replaced, new meeting rooms were added, and the roof was re-slatted. In 1996, ‘The Wesley Hall’ was built, incorporating a new entrance and atrium. The church was restored to its earlier colour scheme in 2011, when it was redecorated by prisoners from HMP Kirklevington Grange.

The Yarm Octagonal Church, founded as a meeting house when the hayloft in George Merryweather’s stable or the outdoor market square were the only meeting places, continues after 250 years as a place of Methodist worship and servant of the community.

An impressive guest preacher programme has been arranged for this anniversary year. For further information, visit the church website www.yarmmethodistchurch.org.uk or contact Church Heritage Officer Arthur George on 01642 652326.

Co-author Deacon Cedric May, introduces *Philippe Baker: Sark's Methodist Missionary to Haiti* by Leslie Griffiths et al (Scarborough, 2012), published to raise funds for Haiti.

Supporting Haiti through missionary history



This short work on the brief ministry of Philippe Baker is the inspiring tale of the striking impact made by this young, nineteenth-century Channel Islander in the Caribbean. This 40-page booklet owes most to the Revd the Lord Leslie Griffiths, former chair of the Methodist Heritage Committee, who knows intimately the background to this biography set in the island republic of Haiti.

The impetus to tell this story came from the devastating earthquake of January 2010, which reduced the capital, Port-au-Prince, to rubble and left 300,000 people dead and 1.5 million homeless. Lord Griffiths skilfully paints the background to the missionary fervour in the Channel Islands and particularly the Islands' contribution

to Methodism in Haiti. In a series of articles (reprinted with permission from the *Methodist Recorder*), he gives his impressions of the aftermath of the force seven earthquake and his opinion on the wasteful competitiveness of some aid agencies. He corrects the myth of a primitive population of ex-slaves with an interesting portrait of prize-winning poet of the early twentieth century and Methodist convert, Etzer Vilaire. He concludes on a note of hope and dares to suggest that the earthquake gave Haiti the shake-up it needed. The present writer translates the story of Philippe Baker's three-week mission as it was described in the pages of *Le Magasin Méthodiste* in 1882–83, a French-language journal published by the French circuit in Guernsey. This piece of missionary

history deserves to be preserved and to be much better known.

The rapid response to the earthquake from MRDF and to the hurricane and cholera epidemic also of 2010 is outlined briefly, emphasising the validity of MRDF's strategy of sustained development through co-operation with successful partners already working in the stricken country.

All the production costs for 500 copies of *Sark's Methodist Missionary to Haiti* have been paid. It is hoped that the proceeds will raise a modest sum that will go towards support for education – one of the best long-term ways out of poverty.

The suggested price for this publication (including p&p in the UK and Channel Islands) is £4.50. An additional donation, if you are able, would confirm the authors in their belief that this is a valuable page in Methodism's history and a thoroughly worthwhile project.



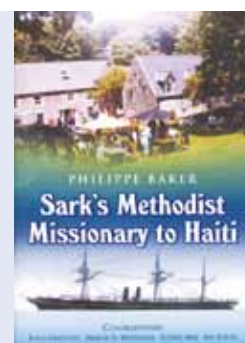
Left: 'New' Sark Methodist chapel (1926); the old chapel was relocated stone-by-stone in the 1920s

Right: The gates of the old Sark chapel (dedicated 1797): all that remains in situ of the chapel Baker would have known

Note from the Editor: Please note that this publication is not available from Methodist Heritage. For your copy and to support this Sark-Haiti Fund, please contact Deacon Cedric May, 5 Waterside Gardens, York YO31 9RF. Please make cheques payable to 'The Sark-Haiti Fund'.

The 'Connexional Haiti Appeal' has so far raised £500,000, and is also part of the response made by the Methodist Church in Britain. These funds have been used responsibly, working in partnership with the Methodist Church in Haiti, to provide education, reconstruction and healthcare for the people of Haiti.

[A copy of the Methodist Church's Haiti Update will also be sent with your booklet.](#)



Dates for your diary...

The Demon Drink: Temperance and the Working Class

Exhibition at Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum (transferring from The People's History Museum, Manchester)

28 March – 31 October 2013

More details at www.englesea-brook-museum.org.uk Tel: 01270 820836

Study Day - Losing the Boozing: the History and Future of Alcohol, Abstinence and Teetotalism in the Methodist Church

Speakers already confirmed: Dr Annemarie McAllister (Lancaster University) and Jon Curtis (VentureFX).

8 June 2013 More details at www.englesea-brook-museum.org.uk Tel: 01270 820836

Methodist Archivists' Network *Brush off the dust – Dig up the dirt*

Promoting our stories, preserving our records and getting value out of our archives.

15 June, 10.30am – 3.30pm (coffee from 10am)
The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham.

Wesley Historical Society Annual Lecture, AGM & 120th Anniversary Service

Annual Lecture: the Revd Margaret P Jones MA, M Phil on *Grand-daughters to Susanna: Women's discipleship in Wesleyan Methodism, 1800–1850*
Preacher at the anniversary service: the Revd Dr Martin Wellings

Saturday 29 & Sunday 30 June

Wesley Memorial Church, Epworth DN9 1EP.
For further details, see www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/events

or contact Dr J A Hargreaves, 7 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax HX1 3AH. Email: johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk

My Primitive Methodist Ancestors “Everyone has a story to tell. What's yours?”

Our new community archive website network is all about sharing stories, memories, photos and research: three linked websites allowing you to contribute your Methodist history. Look out for a report on the network launch in the next *Heritage News*.

As well as www.MyMethodistHistory.org.uk, we have two sites that focus on particular nineteenth-century denominations of Methodism: *My Wesleyan Methodist Ancestors* and *My Primitive Methodist Ancestors*. Jill Barber, project director at Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum of Primitive Methodism tells us more about the success so far of the 'Prims' site (www.MyPrimitiveMethodists.org.uk):

“We all belong to different communities. One hundred years ago, over two hundred thousand people were Primitive Methodists, some for at least three generations, since the first camp meeting at Mow Cop in 1807. Primitive Methodism was a radical, working class movement that led to social action and changed the lives of working people. This is a heritage we are proud to share.

“We receive hundreds of enquiries each year from people tracing their family history who want to know more about the lives of their Primitive Methodist ancestors. We also receive enquiries

from local historians wanting to find out about Primitive Methodist chapels, which had a huge impact on the social and economic life of communities and are rapidly disappearing from the landscape.

“In June 2012, we decided to bring volunteers together to create an online community archive: a one-stop shop to share information about every aspect of Primitive Methodism, and preserve it for the future. This is vitally important as memories of places and people are in danger of being lost if we do not capture them now.

“In just 6 months, volunteers have added almost 800 pages to the website, which has attracted over 3,500 visitors from 53 countries! There have been an astonishing 27,000 page views. Anyone can add text and photos to the site, or comment on existing pages. We particularly want more photos of former Primitive Methodist chapels.”

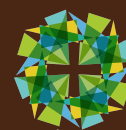


The deadline for submission of articles for the Autumn 2013 newsletter is 8 July 2013.

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

Heritage News is the bi-annual newsletter of **Methodist Heritage**, part of the Methodist Church in Britain, 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.



**Methodist
Heritage**

The **Methodist Church**