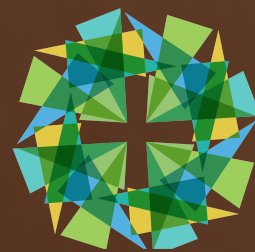


Methodist Heritage News



Autumn 2014

*“God almighty first planted a garden.
And indeed it is the purest of human
pleasures.”*

Francis Bacon, Essay XLVI Of Gardens



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The garden of Epworth

A clear vision and generous donations from businesses have led to the transformation of the garden at Wesley Memorial Church in Epworth.

We already had a garden in front of the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Epworth. Then, in 2012, an offer was made by a member of the congregation to draw up proposals to re-landscape the gardens to the front of the church. These had largely remained unchanged since 1890, with rectangular formal rose beds, and symmetrical lawned areas. Whilst always carefully maintained, they were fairly described as resembling a traditional municipal park – but without the “Keep off the grass” signs.

So a proposal for new gardens was made. A hesitating and sometimes uncertain church determined to go with

the new vision which had just one aim. That was to invite the public into the grounds, whether for use as a green space or a heritage resource. We realised that these gardens would be a significant asset for the people of Epworth and international visitors to the Old Rectory. And being on the High Street they would be highly accessible. We also recognised they had to be welcoming and user friendly for disabled visitors.

Our vision had three parts. Firstly, it offered extended paved areas to the main entrance for the use of worshippers. Secondly and importantly, it provided a

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new central circular area featuring the Wesleyan heritage, including a John Wesley statue and Charles Wesley heritage stone. Thirdly, it offered a kitchen garden of raised beds to be used by church groups (e.g. brownies and toddler groups). In addition, our former rectangular beds were to be replaced by curving paths and circular paving.

What was even more remarkable was that the whole scheme was to be resourced by donations, worth in excess of £50,000, from commercial firms. One donor provided the stone products - including the statue, one the sand, gravel and cement and another the plants - comprising 1,000 shrubs. Others gave us the sleepers for the raised beds, the seating, the labour and the design and project management.

What is the result? Our gardens have not just been improved but transformed. Initial comments from both inside and outside the church are that this is something to be celebrated. The end result transcends



Images:

1. Raised flower beds in the kitchen garden
2. John Wesley statue
3. Design plan for the new garden

expectations. It now provides a natural focus for our distinctive and internationally significant Methodist heritage, in one of the most accessible sites in Epworth.

Speaking on behalf of the church council Revd David Leese said: "This generous gift will allow the garden not only to be a facility to be viewed from the road, but also a green space to be experienced. As well as the garden, through the central seating area, it will accentuate the Wesley

Heritage which is the cause that brings our visitors. This is change for a purpose.

"The church council is indebted to the generosity of Lapidia of Harrogate providers of the statue and materials and NT Killingley garden contractors, together with Stephen Welch who has designed the scheme."

Revd David Leese

The Revd David Leese is superintendent minister at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Epworth

Editorial



It is my privilege to write this editorial – my last as commissioning editor. I have enjoyed my time working on *Heritage News*, but new things beckon. It hardly seems four years since the very first edition was published. My involvement, initially with the *Methodist Archives & History Newsletter* and now *Heritage News*,

has opened my eyes to the wonderful heritage that the people called Methodists have.

In this edition, we have a focus on 'collections'. You can read about the collections management policy for historic objects that the Methodist Heritage Committee has been developing. In bringing four congregations into one church, the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church set about rationalising their objects

and then using them to tell their combined story. While Eveline van Breemen tells us about the Take One Object exhibition being staged at Epworth Old Rectory and the variety of interpretations that just one teapot might offer. The Old Rectory is well worth a visit, even at times when there is no exhibition.

In collections stories of a different kind, we report the completion of the cataloguing of the 'Fletcher-Tooth Letters' from the Methodist archives at the John Rylands Library. Not to mention the success of award-winning virtual archive *My Primitive Methodist Ancestors*. Congratulations Jill, Geoff and all at Englesea Brook Museum.

May I encourage you to appreciate our Methodist heritage and spread the good news of the glorious heritage we have? One final thing – could **you** consider helping Jo Hibbard with the production of *Heritage News*? if you are interested and wish to know more, please email Jo at: hibbardj@methodistchurch.org.uk

John Miles, Commissioning Editor

Cataloguing an archive of the Evangelical Revival

A blog post by **John Hodgson**,
Manuscripts and Archives Manager

The rich potential of an archive relating to the Evangelical Revival is now being realised, with the completion of a sixteen-year project to catalogue the intimate correspondence contained within the remarkable Fletcher-Tooth archive, held at the John Rylands Library.

John Fletcher (1729–85) and his wife Mary Bosanquet (1739–1815) were two of the leading figures of the Evangelical Revival, an event that produced Methodism and related denominations as well as the evangelical movement of the Church of England. The contribution made by this remarkable couple has consistently been overshadowed by that of John Wesley, but their joint ministry is now attracting fresh



Photos: Top, one of the letters from the Fletcher-Tooth archive. Bottom, Mary Fletcher, a leading figure in the Evangelical Revival

attention. This reappraisal is being promoted by a major cataloguing project which, after 16 years, has reached a significant milestone.

Unlocking the potential

The project aims to unlock the research potential of the personal papers of the Fletchers and their associate Mary Tooth (1774–1843). The Fletcher-Tooth archive is one of the largest in the Methodist Archives and Research Centre (MARC at: www.bit.ly/1k9llxo) comprising 42 boxes of letters, diaries, sermons, notebooks, theological treatises, scripture notes and legal papers created between 1760 and 1843.

The collection has international research significance for the study of evangelical Christianity. John Fletcher was a model Anglican parish priest whose work as a systematic theologian remains influential, especially in the United States. His wife Mary was a formidable religious leader in her own right who, for 30 years after her husband's death, exercised oversight of both Methodism and the Church of England in the Shropshire parish of Madeley. Mary was the first woman authorised by John Wesley to preach, and her manuscript sermons are a unique survival from the period. As significant as they are in isolation, when viewed together, the devotional

writings of John and Mary Fletcher comprise one of the spiritual treasures of the Revival.

The significance of the collection extends beyond the religious. Madeley and its adjacent village of Coalbrookdale were early centres of iron-founding and related trades. The Fletcher-Tooth collection shines a fascinating light on the development of one of the modern world's first industrial communities.

Since 1997 Dr Gareth Lloyd has been engaged in the detailed cataloguing of thousands of individual letters sent to the Fletchers and Mary Tooth from correspondents from every part of the country.

Work on the in-letters was completed in December 2013 and the catalogue is now available online through ELGAR. Future phases of the project will make available catalogues of other parts of the collection, including letters written by the Fletchers and papers connected with their oversight of religious life in Madeley.

Enquiries about the collection should be emailed to Dr Lloyd: gareth.lloyd@manchester.ac.uk.

The publishers are grateful to John Hodgson and Gareth Lloyd, Archivist, at The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester, for permission to reproduce this post from the John Rylands Library Special Collections Blog: www.rylandscollections.wordpress.com



The challenge of the Connexional collections

Heritage Officer, **Jo Hibbard**, describes the work undertaken by the Methodist Heritage Committee, to put in place a Connexional policy for collections management, focusing on historic objects

The Methodist Church has recorded its decisions and actions in minutes and journals from the very start of the movement. As a result we have detailed instructions in our *Constitutional Practice & Discipline* on what records to keep, and how to manage them as they become archives of the Church (specifically in Standing Order 015).

Conveniently, the Church's desire to deposit its locally-created records in the context of other local history in the relevant regional record office is supported by The National Archives and local Records Offices as good practice. Generally our documents are welcome and graciously received.

Historic artefacts

However, we lack similar guidance, or obvious repositories, in relation to the historic artefacts we have amassed. One consequence of rationalising circuits and closing chapels is the increasing need to support trustees in managing the memorabilia these chapels contain. British Methodism has four nationally-accredited museums, in places of worldwide Connexional significance. However, the content of each of their collections is controlled by a collections development policy, with strict guidance on acquisition and ethical disposal. They are not the 'attics' of the Church.

Sometimes our communities have artworks or objects in their possession, on display in a chapel or locked away in a circuit safe, which could have great financial value or are considered 'Connexionally significant' to the development of Methodism. Generally though, the value of our artefacts is more likely to be measured in relevance to local history or events in the life of a chapel community. For example, silver trowels used for laying

foundation stones or anniversary banners lovingly made within the last 40 years.

Over the past year, the challenges that historic artefacts present have been at the top of the Methodist Heritage Committee's agenda. They commissioned heritage and museums consultant, Emma Chaplain, who has significant experience of both accreditation of museums and the management of collections.

Emma and I have consulted a number of people. These include some of our superintendent ministers, as well as district and circuit archivists, property colleagues, the Connexional Leaders' forum and our museum managers. We have discussed and refined our ideas with the committee, and in April 2014 Sarah Friswell, chair of the Heritage Committee, presented the resulting 'Historic artefact collections management policy' proposal to the Methodist Council for their approval.

Read the full report and policy at: www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/coun-MC14-40-methodist-heritage-april-2014.pdf

Guidance documents

Proposals for changes and additions to standing orders will be prepared for approval by the Methodist Conference of 2015. In the meantime, the Council approved the preparation of a suite of guidance documents, which it is expected will be presented to the



Methodist Council for approval by January 2015.

Some of the draft documents have already been 'road tested' with Methodist archivists and members of the Methodist heritage sites network. The guidance aims to help trustees make decisions about taking in new objects to their heritage site or chapel. It advises them on how to look after and use for mission the objects they acquire or hold (eg through interpretation and display). It also tells them how to dispose ethically of objects that are not appropriate in a church, or may be beyond renovation and use at all. Extra guidance papers have been proposed to offer particular support on memorial plaques and on the implications of 'listing'.

To help trustees assess the value of artefacts, we have produced a 'significance grid'. This enables users to consider the financial, artistic and missional value of an artefact and whether it has Connexional, regional, or local church significance. A second grid offers suggestions as to what trustees might do with an artefact of significance. Sadly, this cannot provide the neat or universal resolutions that are possible with document archiving. One reason for this is that the collection policies and focus of local museums may vary considerably.

Not a solo sport

We do not propose that anyone in a local church tries to make these sorts of decisions about artefacts on their own: this is not a solo sport. Our advice is that you work in a group, make an inventory and then keep detailed records of your decision-making, which can be deposited as part of the disposal records of the chapel. You can download the draft guidance documents from www.methodistheritage.org.uk/artefacts.htm.

Finally, you may be aware of the sterling service offered to the Connexion by the Church's volunteer advisor on records management and archiving, Mr Philip Thornborow. Philip is the Methodist archives liaison officer (email: loma2012@btinternet.com).

The Methodist Council of April 2014 approved the Heritage Committee appointing an equivalent officer for Methodist historic objects, who can give support and guidance on the significance, interpretation and disposal of artefacts. If you feel this could be you or you

know of a suitably qualified individual, we are working on a role description, so do please let me know.

Please send your comments on the new policy or guidance to me at hibbardj@methodistchurch.org.uk. Or call me on 020 7467 5257.



The Take One Object exhibition at Epworth Old Rectory opened in March 2014. Former Rectory collections volunteer, Eveline van Breemen, tells how she set it up and in the process unearthed some fascinating stories about a teapot

Take one teapot

In October 2013 I began volunteering for Epworth Old Rectory as part of the collections team. I was lucky that new temporary exhibitions needed to be set up soon after and I was allowed to do a large part of these. Claire (then EOR curator/manager) already had some ideas to start with, one of them coming from the Victoria and Albert museum; Take One Object. We chose the “Wesley Wedgwood” teapot to be Epworth’s one object.

I believe that any object can be interesting, even if at first glance it seems quite simple and perhaps dull. Once you start focusing on the stories around an object, it comes to life. This is what Take One Object is all about - exploring the many details of an object.

Where to start? I asked myself questions about the object. In a

Photos: below, Epworth Old Rectory, right, Take One Object display case

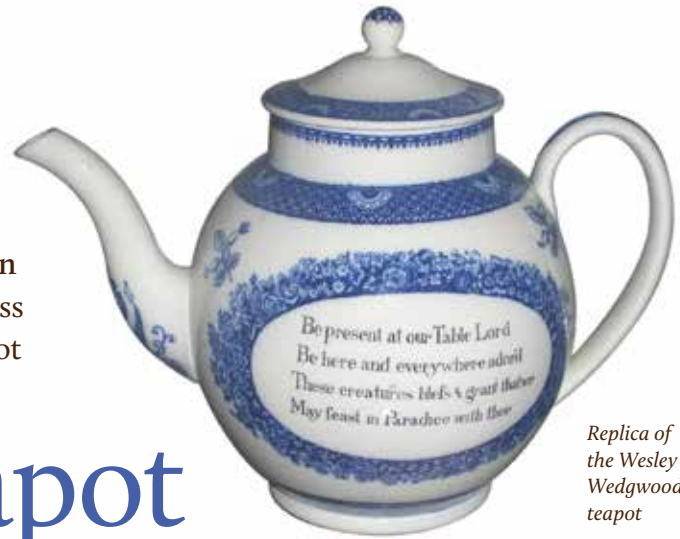


way, I was peeling back the layers of information about this one item. We know it is a teapot. But do we know who made it, when it was made, why it was made? These questions directly relate to the object - the first layer.

Questions and answers

To go into more detail you can ask more questions relating to the first answers, eg Who made it? What do we know about them? Did they make more of these? When and where did they live? What else have they made?

Following this process you can get yourself further away from the object but still the questions and answers relate to it.



Replica of the Wesley Wedgwood teapot

In this case the teapot was made by Josiah Wedgwood. Actually, he only made the original teapot himself. Those on display are 20th century replicas. The story of the original teapot is this: John Wesley was preaching in Burslem in March 1760. Whilst there he walked past the Wedgwood factory. Josiah Wedgwood lived next to the factory and at that moment was working in his garden. The men had a good conversation. A year later Wedgwood made this special teapot, which would hold a gallon of tea.

From there I went to the next layer, which brought me to John Wesley who actually did not drink any tea for a long time (c.1741-1753). I added amusing quotes from one of Wesley’s letters to a friend; quotes about why one should most certainly not drink tea.

In exhibitions there is a limit as to how much information can be displayed. Only some stories can be included. Other information can be used for educational purposes eg asking visitors questions during tours or putting information in a booklet.

Eveline van Breemen is now a collections assistant for social history at North Lincolnshire Museum

Historic objects from four Edinburgh churches have been brought together in a fascinating new exhibition. But how do you tell the treasures from the tat? Well, that's been the challenge for their new exhibition curator, Alison Butler



Photos © City of Edinburgh Methodist Church

Telling treasures from tat

As the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church was formed, some of our collective clutter from the four founding congregations was carefully disposed of and some was saved.

Why was it saved? Because objects can tell stories; they can tell us something about our past, our common inheritance and our distinctive characteristics. Stuck in cupboards, however, their stories can't be heard. So we have put together an exhibition in the church's gallery, featuring items from the original four congregations of the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church.

Many people have helped create this exhibition but Alison Butler has been its curator. She says, "This has been the most wonderful experience. It's been like getting to know family members I have never met before. I've had to steep myself in the histories of all four of the churches to understand what made them tick.

"I hope our guests will find out more about Methodism; what makes it distinctive; its people and its contribution to the life of the City of Edinburgh. For our church members,

I really hope they will find out more about the life of congregations they did not know, as well as revisiting familiar objects. I also hope the exhibition will challenge us to think about the future."

Uncovering our DNA

There are some beautiful objects included in the collection - some practical and some that frankly others might think were tat. But Alison, who used to work for the National Trust for Scotland, says, "Nothing is there without a reason. It's not about showing off our heirlooms. It's more like uncovering our DNA."

The exhibition is called A Legacy of Love and Action. Belinda Letby, minister of the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church, says, "These objects tell a story of people who have cared deeply for each other and for the world - and have had fun. Our challenge is to live up to this inheritance so that we too show God's love to all in our time and in our own way."

There is one section of the exhibition which is still unfinished. As a church, we've been lucky enough

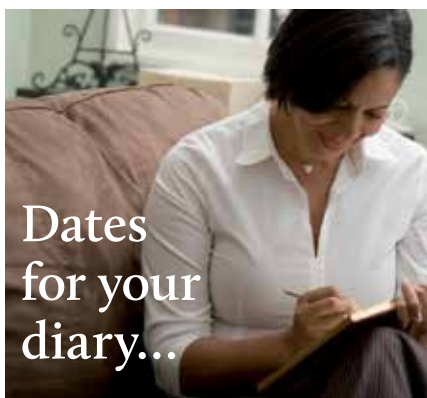
that since we formed in 2008 other people have joined us. They too bring their stories and backgrounds. When they visit the exhibition, members and friends who have joined the church in the last six years are being asked to help complete our story by sharing more about where they have come from and what they may have brought from their home churches.

Alison Butler says, "In a way we have all been adopted into the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church. This should never mean that we forget our backgrounds or feel we cannot value all the good memories. But we can't live in the past and even this exhibition won't remain unchanged."

Alison is already planning new displays, encouraging members to share their memories and working out how to up-cycle some objects which are beyond repair. The hope is that this will be the first of many heritage exhibitions in the church's gallery.

Alison says, "There are so many more interesting stories to tell and themes to explore. I hope in time we can encourage school groups, as well as others, to engage with these stories of faith and to think about what it might mean for us all today."

Gillian McKinnon



Dates for your diary...

Mary Jones World

Launch of the preview season for the Bible Society's new heritage centre

5 October – the Bicentenary of The Revd Thomas Charles

St Beuno's Church, Llanycil, Bala

A new centre using modern interpretive media to tell the stories of Mary Jones and the Welsh Bible, and of the Revd Thomas Charles of Bala, and to celebrate the Bible Society's work in Wales. More in our next edition of *Heritage News*.

Open in 2014 for 6–31 October and available for pre-booked groups throughout the winter. Re-opens for 2015 on 1 April. See: <http://tinyurl.com/kqnyb4l>

Churches Visitor & Tourism Association

Northern and Southern Symposia

11 October: Welcoming People to your Church – York University

18 October: Working in Partnership – St James Priory, Bristol

Two distinct programmes of case studies and practical ideas for developing best practice in welcoming visitors to places of worship; each day £25 pp. And why not stay for dinner, and even the weekend?

Speakers and booking details for both events: <http://churchestourismassociation.info/>

Oxford-Manchester Methodist Studies Seminar

6 December

Manchester Wesley Research Centre, Nazarene Theological College, Dene Road, Didsbury, Manchester M20 2GU
The MWRC and Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford
Brookes University, have established a bi-annual seminar series, which provides an opportunity for established and emerging students of Methodist Studies to present their research. For more details, contact Dr Geordan Hammond, MWRC Director: ghammond@nazarene.ac.uk, or Dr Peter Forsaith, OCMCH Research Fellow: pforsaith@brookes.ac.uk

Ancestors' website wins coveted award

CONGRATULATIONS to the Englesea Brook Museum team of Dr Jill Barber and the volunteer editors of *My Primitive Methodist Ancestors* (www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk) website. They are the winners of the 'Best New' Community Archives and Heritage Group of the Year category in the Community Archives and Heritage Group Awards 2014.

Launched in June 2012, *My Primitive Methodist Ancestors* was the first of the Methodist Connexion's network of family history websites. Based on worldwide user-contributed content, the site is monitored and managed by volunteers at Englesea Brook Museum.

My Primitive Methodist Ancestors has become a 'one stop shop' to make available a virtual archive of information about Primitive Methodism. It has hugely increased the museum's outreach, and now has more than 2,800 pages, created by 320 registered users.

In the 2014 CAHG (Community Archives and Heritage Group) Awards there were three category winners: 'Most Inspirational', 'Most Innovative' and 'Best New' Community Archives and Heritage Group.

CAHG is supported by the Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland). There were 29

entries for the awards for work done in 2013.

Genealogist and TV presenter, Dr Nick Barratt, presented the awards in June, during the CAHG annual conference in London. Nick is best known as genealogical consultant for series 1 to 4 of the ever-popular celebrity family history BBC TV series, *Who Do You Think You Are?*



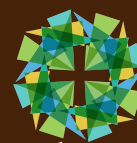
Dr Jill Barber and website editor, Geoff Dickinson, proudly show off their CAHG Award certificate, presented by Dr Nick Barratt

The deadline for submission of articles for the Spring 2015 newsletter is Monday 5 January 2015. 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.



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