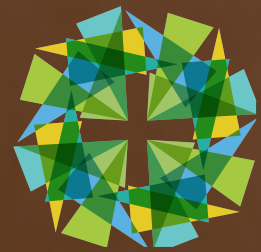


Methodist Heritage News



Spring 2015

Bicentenary brings new life to Bala

Mary Jones World

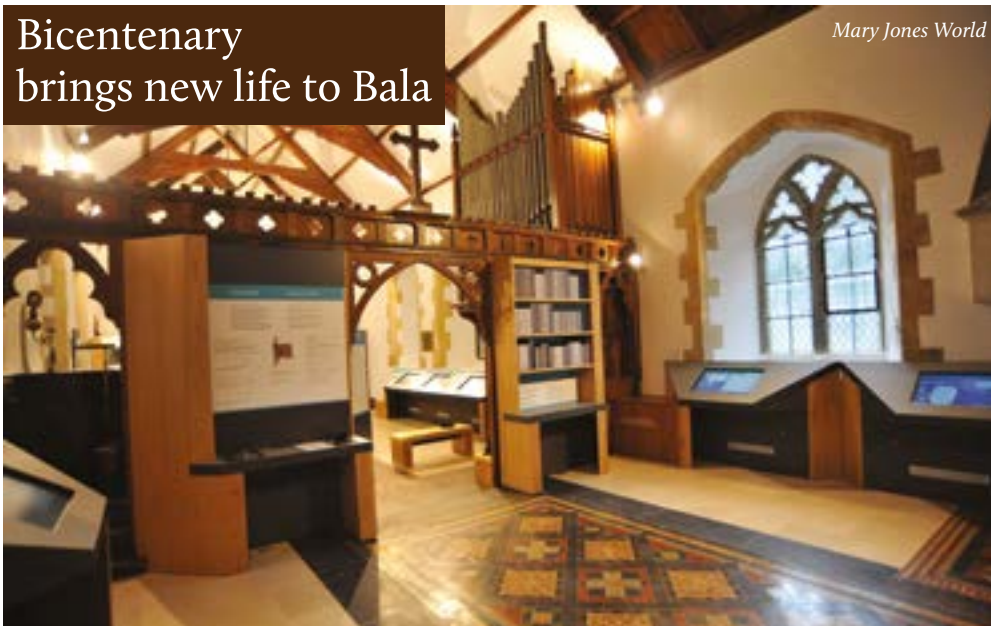


Photo © Bible Society, Evan Dobson

“5 October 2014 was the bicentenary of Welsh Methodist the Revd Thomas Charles, one of the leading figures in the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804,” explained Ian Walden OBE, Heritage Consultant to Bible Society, on the shores of Llyn Tegid, flanked by the mountains of Snowdonia in north Wales. This was the launch of the preview season for Bible Society’s exciting new heritage centre to be known as ‘Mary Jones World’.

The centre is named after the 15 year-old weaver’s daughter who saved for 6 years to be able to afford a Bible printed in her native language, Welsh, and then walked about 25 miles from Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to Bala to buy a Bible from Thomas Charles.

Bible Society purchased the redundant Grade II listed building, St Beuno’s Church, Llanycil, Bala in 2007. Located at Llanycil on the outskirts of Bala, the centre is on a site which has been a place of Christian

worship for more than 1,500 years. The site is a rich vein of cultural, faith and biblical heritage that has helped shape the identity, character and values of modern Wales. Notable persons buried in the churchyard include Thomas Charles and many of his family. The church building was rebuilt in 1881, but was closed in 2003 due to a dwindling congregation and the need to rationalise church provision in the Bala area.

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For the last six years the charity has worked on developing the project, securing funding and gaining planning permission. During this time it has commissioned architects' plans and worked with officials at Gwynedd Council, Snowdonia National Park Authority and CADW to ensure that the development is sympathetic with the building and its surroundings, yet can operate as a significant visitor attraction, bringing people and income into the area.

The church is being fully restored with a sympathetic conversion, which retains original features yet will ensure that it is efficient and acceptable to visitors. A new car park is also being created on a lakeside site.

The new visitor centre will use modern interpretive media to tell the story of Mary Jones and provide:



- an opportunity to learn about the Bible's impact in Wales and the rest of the world
- an opportunity to honour the significance of Bala, Mary Jones and the work of Thomas Charles, who was instrumental in founding Bible Society more than 200 years ago
- an educational centre to develop new and inspiring teaching resources
- a centre where, by returning to its

Mary Jones World is one of the new sites in the 2015/2016 (3rd) edition of the FREE *Methodist Heritage Handbook*, and will re-open for 2015 on 1 April. The new *Handbook* also includes features to help visitors untangle the developmental strands and denominations of Methodism including Welsh (or Calvinistic) Methodism.

roots, Bible Society's work in Wales will be celebrated and developed

- a contribution to the economic regeneration of the area through job creation and tourism.

The story of Mary Jones is more than a historic snapshot. It inspired Thomas Charles to seek to provide Bibles to all who wanted them and through the ongoing work of Bible Societies throughout the world, that work continues today.



Editorial

Although I am the only Connexional Team officer employed by the Methodist Council to support Methodist Heritage, it's hardly a 'solo sport'.

I work closely with colleagues across the Connexional Team, especially from Publishing, Property and the Learning Network. Across the Connexion, I work with numerous expert and dedicated volunteers: the Methodist Heritage Committee, and their Archives and Records Advisory Group, and the support networks of heritage site managers and stewards, volunteer

website editors and local archivists. Conservatively, that's 750 people.

This edition of *Heritage News* will be introducing you to some more new faces, and new places to visit. 'Welcome' especially to Gillian Crawley, the new manager at Epworth Old Rectory – accredited museum and a key heritage site for the Methodist Church (see page 6).

One of the 2008 Methodist Conference's priorities in establishing Methodist Heritage was to improve communication and collaboration between our heritage enthusiasts. The Methodist Heritage Committee is not offering individual meetings for our different interest groups in 2015, but organising a residential conference to engage everyone who is concerned we have 'Mission-shaped Heritage' (see page 7). All are welcome.

Jo Hibbard, Methodist Heritage Officer

STOP PRESS

We were delighted to hear the news that the New Room in Bristol has been awarded a grant of £2,600,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This, alongside a grant of £1,400,000 from the Bristol Methodist District, will enable the existing facilities to be updated. The trustees are planning to build in the Horsefair Courtyard, a three-storey education and hospitality centre, allowing an increase in the number and total redisplay of the museum rooms. Find out more at www.whatsongroupcms.co.uk/NewRoomCMS/uploads/File/New-Room-HLF-Press-Release-February-2015.pdf.

Kindle the Wesley flame!

The Revd Robert Gee explains how his exciting discovery of two hundred and sixty-five years of heritage got a very twenty-first century ebook makeover...

Discovering the *Osmotherley Society's Book commencing 1750* was a real joy and privilege. I had been looking at our historical records for the Osmotherley Methodist Chapel, which was built in 1754. It has a peculiar history, not least because of its association with John Wesley. The chapel was built by three brothers in their backyard on the understanding that it was available for the Methodist

Society as long as they needed it. Our local authority Record Office holds several references to the 'Society's Book'. From these I knew it was a valuable work, but did it still exist? The Records Office were as ignorant as me on this and my only hope was to ask one of the oldest members, who immediately said that she had been keeping it safely. The problem being that 'out of sight' meant that it was 'out of mind' and unavailable. As minister of the church at that time, I asked if I might take it into my care and make a fair copy just in case it should ever be damaged or destroyed in future.

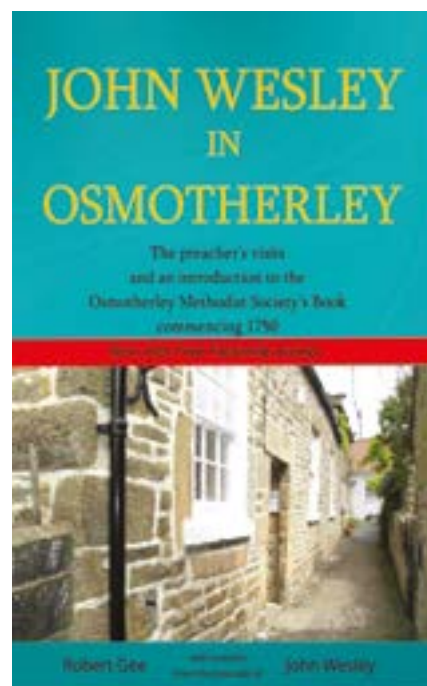
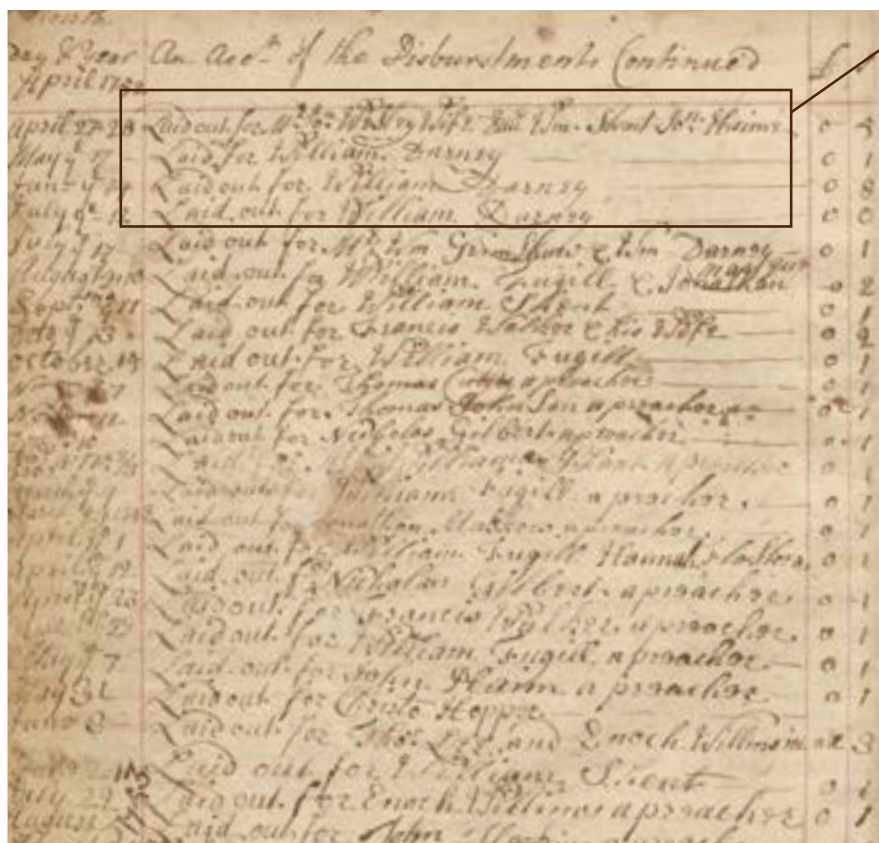
The Record Office archivist was excellent, allowing me to photocopy the book using their book copier. This resulted in a high definition set of images which could be studied easily on a computer. They are so good that they are easier to study on a screen than in the original! Being mostly in beautiful copperplate script they need some decoding and close scrutiny.

I already had a website for the chapel at www.osmotherleymethodistchurch.org.uk and decided to use that platform to launch information regarding the find. Such a niche website has little impact on the internet these days, so I decided to publish a book on the Kindle platform, via Amazon, to gain publicity. Writing a Kindle book is not that hard, but including the high definition copy of the 'Society's Book' proved beyond both my and the Kindle platform's abilities. So now you can simply purchase the Kindle Book 'John Wesley in Osmotherley' via Amazon and you get access details to download the full version of the ebook from our website.

Highlights include entries about John Wesley's visits with his wife and daughter – prime evidence of those early days of Methodism. Notable preachers were George Whitefield and John Nelson, and many other worthies too! A 'must have' book for researchers.

Osmotherley Society's Book commencing 1750 showing the visit of Mr Wesley, his wife and her daughter

The Kindle Book 'John Wesley in Osmotherley'



Whitefield's 300 years remembered and honoured in Gloucester

On the 3rd Sunday of Advent and just 2 days before what could have been his 300th birthday (16 December 2014), worshippers at Gloucester's Northgate Methodist Church celebrated the life of city-born preacher and internationally-acclaimed evangelist, George Whitefield.

Gloucestershire Methodist local preacher and church member, Alan Morgan, led the congregation in the tercentenary celebration of Whitefield's birth, entitled "Prince of Preachers". Alan said, "We give thanks for the life and ministry of George Whitefield. In a relatively short life-span, George Whitefield travelled the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, and made several perilous voyages across the Atlantic, preaching throughout the east coast colonies of America. His only aim was to proclaim the love of Christ to any who would listen. Whitefield's conversion – or 'rebirth' as he called it – which he experienced in 1735, was three years before the conversion experiences of John and Charles Wesley".

Born in the Bell Hotel in the centre of Gloucester, George was the seventh child of Elizabeth and Thomas Whitefield, the owners of that well-respected hotel. George



Portrait of George Whitefield
by David Martin (1727-97)

Photo supplied by Wesley's Chapel

went to Crypt School Gloucester* and enjoyed drama – public speaking and taking part in plays. His teacher encouraged him to develop his natural voice skills. Because of family challenges, George left school and gave a hand at the Bell Hotel. At this time, he developed an interest in the Church and hoped he could go to Oxford to train for the ministry. At the age of 19 George did manage to get to Oxford, by going as a servant to one of the wealthy students. It was



Mark Topping as George Whitefield

then he met members of the "Holy Club" led by John Wesley.

"Prince of Preachers" included guest readers depicting different parts of Whitefield's life and faith journey, who also shared their thoughts. These characters included: Whitefield's sister; friend and hymn-writer, Charles Wesley; the captain of *The Whittaker* sailing ship, which took Whitefield to Georgia; recollections from a member of the city centre St Mary de Crypt congregation, where 21 year old George Whitefield delivered his first sermon (and where the pulpit remains); a vicar from St Michael's Church at Gloucester City Cross and the church warden of the original Church of St John the Baptist in Northgate, the current home of the Methodist City Centre Church in Gloucester.

With choral pieces and singing led by a 13-strong choir, prayers were said by Northgate Methodist minister the Revd Tim Harrison and senior church

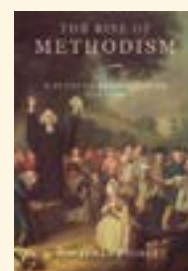
Inspired by archives

Dr Jonathan Rodell, English social history tutor, Cambridge University, shares the inspiration for *The Rise of Methodism*.

“In 1982 during my seventh term in sixth form, preparing for Cambridge entrance exams, my history teacher sent me to Aylesbury county records office, for a first smell of musty, old paperwork. I called up 1830s Wesleyan circuit schedules and the history bug bit me. A dissertation on early Methodism in the Vale of Aylesbury followed, then a doctoral thesis on Methodism’s eighteenth and nineteenth century appeal.

“Document searches led to libraries and archives in England and Wales, and Drew and Southern Methodist Universities in America. The more time I spent trawling through local society and circuit records, the clearer it was that accepted narratives of Methodist history were misleading. In *The Rise of Methodism* I re-examine radically England’s largest popular movement, with a bottom-up, rather than top-down, vision of the growth and impact of early Methodism in a forgotten stronghold.”

In chronologically-based chapters, over three major pulses of growth, the book offers a fresh narrative of early Methodism’s sociological make-up and culture. This ambitious project hopes to change the paradigm in which Methodist history is told, providing new tools for mining records of the first generations of Methodists. Bedfordshire Historical Record Society are creating online appendices accompanying the book, plus additional pictures and specially commissioned recordings, reflecting the changing sound of Methodist hymnody. There is a documentary on the book’s main themes on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouedJjbtNno



Cover photo © Boydell & Brewer Ltd



Top left: St Mary De Crypt long shot nave. Top right: St Mary De Crypt pulpit, sounding and eagle. Bottom: St Mary De Crypt

steward, Anne Dunning. Because of the significance of the occasion, BBC Radio Gloucestershire interviewed Alan Morgan for their Sunday Breakfast Show and news bulletins.

Another event in the “Whitefield 300 years Celebration” is planned for 17 May 2015. This time an open air service will take place in the grounds of Gloucester Cathedral at 6.30pm. This will focus on the ‘field preaching’ of Whitefield, who inspired and encouraged John and

Charles Wesley to take the Church’s message outdoors as an effective means of preaching the gospel to more people. The guest preacher is the Revd Lord Leslie Griffiths (past President of the Methodist Conference, former Chair of the Methodist Heritage Committee, superintendent minister of Wesley’s Chapel, and a member of the House of Lords).

Compiled by Gloucestershire Methodist Media Officer, David Bennett

* St Mary de Crypt Church and Old Crypt Schoolroom, Gloucester, are recognised as Methodist Heritage sites and included in the *Methodist Heritage Handbook*. These sites are currently part of an exciting new redevelopment project, Discover DeCrypt. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded project will bring the story of Whitefield vividly to life for a wide-ranging audience, including schools and international groups. Interactive interpretation is being developed to make the experience engaging and fun, as well as being meaningful (see www.discoverdecrypt.org.uk).

New faces at The Old Rectory

Eddie Mardell, trustee and publicity officer, introduces the new Manager, Gillian Crawley, appointed to one of North Lincolnshire's highly popular visitor attractions, Epworth's Old Rectory, famous throughout the world as the childhood home of John and Charles Wesley.

Gillian Crawley brings years of experience to this role having moved from the Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Visitors' Centre at Redditch in the West Midlands.

"My first priority is to really get to know all the volunteers, who give up so much of their spare time to help at the Old Rectory," said Ms Crawley.

"There is a massive project underway at present to restore the building to the way it would have looked when it was occupied by the Wesleys in the early eighteenth century, so there is a big challenge ahead.

"And alongside that there is a very strong ethos to ensure the message of Methodism is given priority, with special emphasis on the role of women in the Methodist movement," she added.

Ms Crawley, who lives at Sutton-cum-Lound, near Retford in Nottinghamshire, obtained an



Gillian Crawley

honours degree in Archaeology at Southampton University and then went on to complete a postgraduate certificate in



The Old Rectory, Epworth

Museum Studies. Then, in 1990, she was made an Associate of the Museums' Association.

"I'm thrilled to be at the Old Rectory," Gillian continued. "And love the joy that people emanate every time I meet them."

Ms Crawley replaces the Revd

Claire Potter, who had held the post for more than five years. She has moved back into circuit ministry as superintendent of the Guildford Methodist Circuit in Surrey, where she is also minister at the Crawley and Cranleigh Methodist churches.

Invitation to share memories

Sarah Braisdell has been appointed by Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) as a researcher. She is a recent graduate from the University of Sheffield where she completed a Masters degree in Modern History. Sarah will be based at Epworth Old Rectory throughout 2015 and will be researching women's movements within the Methodist Church, in their many forms and guises, from Susanna Wesley up until the present day. She explained, "This research plans to tell the story of women's movements in the Methodist Church by inviting women to share their memories and stories orally or in writing. Anyone with memories or stories to share can do this via the My Methodist History website (www.mymethodisthistory.co.uk) or by emailing them directly to me (sgbraisdell1@gmail.com)."

The following questions may

help in directing your thoughts:

1. What is your first memory of encountering any women's movement* in Methodism?
2. What has been your most significant engagement with any women's movement* in Methodism?
3. Where have you seen women changed, or the world changed, by these movements?

* These include Women's Work, the British Unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, Women's Fellowship, Girls' League, Young Wives, Women's Network, Methodist Women in Britain and maybe more – do tell Sarah anything you know or can remember!



Sarah Braisdell



The 2015 Methodist Heritage Conference

16–18 July at Cliff College, Calver, Derbyshire

Organised by Methodist Heritage Committee with the Methodist Church's Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network, Mission-shaped Heritage is for the Methodist networks of heritage property managers and volunteers, archivists and historians. It is also for anyone else from across the academic disciplines, denominations and indeed other faiths, interested in the potential inter-relationship between faith heritage and contemporary mission.

The Revd Steven Wild, Chair of the Cornwall District, and Dr Jill Barber, Project Director of Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism, who will become respectively the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference in 2015, have both signed up to contribute to the conference.

Steven Wild said, "In her heart-wrenching book, *Nobody's Child*, Kate Adie says, 'We all need roots. And we need to know about our past so as to be sure of who we are.' As Methodists our roots are in revival and a passion to share the love of Jesus Christ. We are not a Church born out of theological disagreement – John Wesley's heart was touched by the Holy Spirit; these are our roots.

"Jill and I have chosen for our presidential year the theme, 'Mission and Heritage'. We hope to draw to

the attention of the Methodist people that we are a missionary Church because God is a missionary God. This is all through the Bible. The Psalmist says, 'Come and see what God has done, his wonderful acts among people' (Psalm 66:5). The Church's mission isn't secondary to its being; the Church exists in being mission, and in building up itself for its mission we hope that we can learn from the past and together, as God's people find new ways forward."

Jill Barber added, "I am passionate about using heritage for mission, and the potential of our Methodist story to engage people outside the Church and enable individuals and churches to move forward in faith. During my year as Vice-President I want to look at how we 'Find our voice, and tell our story'. This conference presents an exciting springboard to debate how we can use the past to change the future."

Keynote speakers announced so far include the Right Reverend Colin Fletcher, Bishop of Dorchester, and Professor Terry Stevens, tourism and marketing consultant. Dr Stephen Skuce, Director of Scholarship, Research & Innovation in the Learning Network, is overseeing the call for academic papers. He said, "I'm looking forward to this conference as a great opportunity to think further how Methodism understands the

missional possibilities our excellent heritage provides." As well as academic papers and talks, there will be worship opportunities and choices of practical workshops and visits.

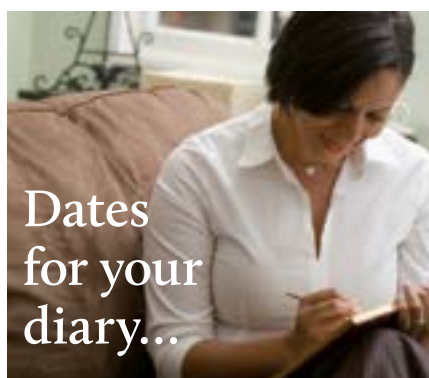
Reflecting on her hopes for the conference, Chair of the Methodist Heritage Committee, Sarah Friswell, said, "I hope that both the heritage and mission aspects of this conference title will appeal to a variety of people. In such a forum I believe we will have the chance to be enriched and challenged by the contribution of our speakers, encouraged by the stories that we share and inspired to go back to our home situations to put into practice what we have learned."

The conference costs £175 per person (all-inclusive, with high quality single en-suite rooms). Day rates are also available.

For the conference programme and booking details or details on how to submit a paper, see www.methodistheritage.org.uk/conference.htm, or contact Diane Foster, Heritage Administrator, on 020 7467 5117 or email fosterd@methodistchurch.org.uk.



Well-dressings are a Derbyshire tradition. Designs are made from natural materials e.g., flower petals, pushed into clay. Black is dried banana skins!



Dates for your diary...

Oxford-Manchester-Durham Methodist Studies Seminar

Saturday 18 April
Oxford Brookes University

This series provides an opportunity for Methodist Studies students (across different disciplines) to present their research findings. For more details, contact Dr Peter Forsaith on 01865 488319 or pforsaith@brookes.ac.uk.

Always welcome: interpreting your church building (Church of England ChurchCare)

Thursday 30 April 2015
Manchester Cathedral

Explaining your church: an opportunity to introduce visitors to the gospel, Christian history and the Church. 10.00am-4.30pm, £40 including lunch. For more details, go to www.churchcare.co.uk/events/860-always-welcome-conference-always-welcome-conference.

People, Places, Possibilities ...

Seven roadshows in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Birmingham, Cambridge, Manchester, Plymouth and Woking on Saturdays during May, June and July by the Methodist/URC Joint Property Strategy Group. Aimed at local churches with an interest in mission, community and buildings. Find out more and register at www.methodist.org.uk/propertyroadshows.

Manchester Wesley Research Centre (MWRC) Annual Lecture 2015

Tuesday 16 June 2015
Nazarene Theological College, Didsbury
Lecturer: Dr David Rainey (Senior Lecturer in Theology)
For more details, go to www.mwrc.ac.uk/mwrc-annual-lecture or contact the MWRC Director on 0161 445 3063 or ghammond@nazarene.ac.uk.

Mission-shaped Heritage: The Methodist Heritage Conference 2015

16-18 July 2015
Cliff College, Derbyshire
A conference for anyone interested in the theory and practice of preserving and extending the use for mission of our Church's heritage. For more details see page 7.

Prims in Print: the changing character of Primitive Methodism

The Wesley Historical Society Annual Meeting and Lecture, at Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum of Primitive Methodism, Saturday 4 July 2015

In 'Prims in Print: the changing character of Primitive Methodism as seen through its literature', the Revd Dr Stephen Hatcher will draw upon his major revision and expansion of the Primitive Methodist bibliography (originally prepared in 1980). An integral part of this process was identifying exactly what characterises a publication of significance to the history of Primitive Methodism.

His lecture will summarise his key findings and examine the changes in the literature, before exploring what this reveals about the character of Primitive Methodist readers, and the theological, spiritual, social and political environment in which Primitive Methodists lived. In viewing Primitive Methodism through its books, he will illuminate the changing character of this most 'chameleon of denominations'.

Stephen Hatcher is a Methodist minister, who between 1996 and 2008 developed the Englesea Brook Chapel project. He was a member of the Methodist Heritage Committee and chair of the Methodist Heritage Sites' Network until March 2015.

He was previously a member of the former Archives and History Committee, representing the Primitive Methodist interest. He holds a PhD for his thesis, 'The origin and early expansion of Primitive Methodism in the Hull Circuit 1819-1851'. He believes that an understanding of our Methodist heritage can lead to greater effectiveness in the mission of the Church today.

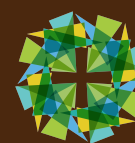
Refreshments will be served from 10.00am, with a welcome and tour 10.30am-12noon. During the lunch break (bring a packed lunch) bibliophiles will have an opportunity to visit the second-hand bookshop at Hassall Road Methodist Church, Alsager (10 min by car). Others may wish to travel further to visit at Mow Cop. The AGM will be held between 1.15 to 2.15pm, followed by the lecture from 2.30-4.00pm, preceded by a short act of worship and followed by refreshments.

For further information, email Dr John A Hargreaves, General Secretary, Wesley Historical Society: johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk.

The deadline for submission of articles for the Autumn 2015 newsletter is Monday 6 July 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

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



**Methodist
Heritage**

The **Methodist Church**