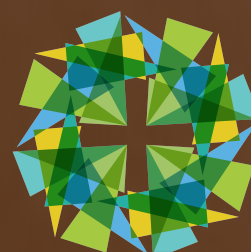


Methodist Heritage News



Autumn 2018



Truly the House of God

Consecrated by the sacred memories of many generations of humble worshippers, this old Barn is as truly the House of God as the noblest cathedral in the land.

Extract from *The Woodlands Lovefeast* by Hannah Mitchell

Hidden in a deeply remote corner of the Peak District, under the dramatic crags known as Alport Castles, an ancient barn has hosted an annual Methodist Lovefeast for over 250 years.

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Welcome to our autumn newsletter, which includes features about the commemoration of the centenary of the end of World War I and a pilgrimage to Bristol. On our centre pages, you'll read about a little-known aspect of Methodist history hidden in the Peak District – one that brings together John Wesley, a Labour activist and fruitcake! We also introduce the new Chair of the Methodist Heritage Committee and honour the memory of two champions of our archives.

Owen Roberts,
Methodist
Heritage
Officer



Editorial

Order your Methodist Heritage calendar for 2019!

To celebrate ten years since the Methodist Church launched its first Heritage Strategy, we have produced an anniversary calendar. You can order this online via Methodist Publishing at <http://bit.ly/mhcalendar2019> or by calling 0845 017 8220. Each costs £4.99 plus postage and packing.



Introducing Alan Beith (the Rt Hon the Lord Beith), the new Chair of the Heritage Committee

I have had a lifelong interest in Methodism's heritage of buildings, artefacts and historical records. If I look back far enough, perhaps I can trace my awakening interest to a tablet in the chapel of the former mining village where I was brought up. It dated from the 1840s, and bore the simple message "Coal pits on fire, providentially extinguished without loss of life. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof". It told a story of work and faith supporting each other. And so much of our heritage has a story to tell.

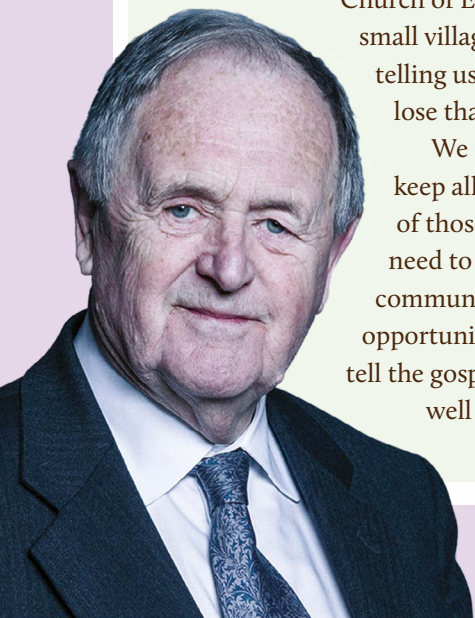
Too often, Methodists have wrongly assumed that our buildings and the art and design within them are inferior, and of little or no value either to us or to the communities we serve. Yet these things can be assets for mission, and we are beginning to see, as the Church of England has seen with its small village churches, communities telling us that they do not want to lose that rich inheritance.

We cannot and should not keep all our buildings. Many of those that we keep will need to widen their role in the community, while using every opportunity to make sure that they tell the gospel story in action, as well as in words, atmosphere, history, beauty and song.

As well as buildings and objects, we have archives in many locations, which tell inspiring stories of Christian witness and allow them to be studied in detail. In our heritage sites, we have examples of professional standards of presentation of buildings, museum collections and archives now, and I want to see these examples serving as a reminder to the whole Connexion that where we have a heritage asset, the first consideration should be whether and how we can use it for mission, rather than how we can get it off our hands. We need to find ways of disseminating practical help, advice and skill training for the hard-pressed volunteers who carry these responsibilities.

I look forward to working with the skilled and experienced teams who are making our rich inheritance serve our mission to this present age.

Read Alan's full article at www.methodistheritage.org.uk



100 Days of Peace and Hope

Jo Hibbard, Director of Engagement, has been representing the Methodist Church on an ecumenical group coordinated by HOPE Together, meeting to consider how to resource churches to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ending of World War 1 (WW1).



His Majesty the King has expressed his desire that this Fourth Anniversary of the War should be observed with special solemnity as a National Day of Prayer.

So begins the *Order of Service for the National Day of Prayer, Sunday, August 4th, 1918*. One hundred days later, the war ended.

One hundred years on, the Methodist Church is encouraging people to pray again for peace, and to seek to bring hope to their communities. HOPE Together has collated a downloadable pdf of 100 ecumenical reflections, including many contributed from the Methodist family. 100 Days of Peace and Hope is available to download from www.remembrance100.co.uk/100-days/

Read Scripture passages and inspiring stories chosen by the President and the President Designate of the Methodist Conference, the General Secretary and the President of the Wesley Historical Society, and the Methodist Heritage Officer, Owen Roberts. This publication is designed to focus our thoughts and guide our prayers day by day. As is our way of using heritage in Methodism, while some of the stories are from the period of WW1, every one aims to make the message of peace and reconciliation through Christ accessible and relevant for today. You don't have to pray every

day or only until 11 November; you may want to pray for the week or two after Remembrance Sunday. Whatever you choose to do, dip in, use the reflections in any order and pray into any day to make a difference in your own way. There are longer contributions for each Sunday, for example, that might be useful for worship leaders.

Churches are often asked to be the venue for, or at least contribute to, a local community's Armistice Day two-minute silence or Remembrance Sunday service. This is a great place to engage in mission through heritage and to gently share the love of God and the message of hope we have as Christians. To give focus to the two-minute silence, especially for people who may not be used to prayer and who wonder where their thoughts should be in that moment, HOPE Together has produced a beautiful and moving booklet, which is priced for purchase in bulk by churches to give away at commemorative events. This important national moment of remembrance can become a valuable opportunity for contemporary outreach and this resource may be useful for you to share with the gathered audience. You can read and

buy copies of the *Silence* gift booklet at www.remembrance100.co.uk/silence/

Links are being added throughout autumn 2018 to make the Remembrance 100 website a rich source of other materials for Remembrance Sunday worship and the two-minute silence, including specially commissioned videos, and ideas for schools' work: www.remembrance100.co.uk/



Celebrate the feast of love



1

On the first Sunday in July, people gather to share testimony, prayer and hymns over fruitcake and water, served in traditional double-handled loving cups.

The Lovefeast has taken place since at least the 1760s; John Wesley himself is said to have sheltered in the adjacent Alport Farm and preached in the barn while travelling in the area.

Judy Skelton lives at Alport Farm and is a member of Woodlands Methodist Chapel, one of the few other buildings in the vast surrounding moorland. She recently helped curate an exhibition, *Remote and Radical*, telling the story of the Lovefeast and the Chapel, which celebrates its own 150th anniversary this year. The exhibition was held at the Anglers Rest, a community pub and café in Bamford, seven miles from the farm.

“The exhibition was inspired when the photographer John Beatty was preparing images for a book about Kinder Scout in 2017,” Judy explains. John wanted to include pictures of the Lovefeast, but as he was out of the country in July, he asked another

photographer, Althea de Carteret, to go on his behalf.

The photographs Althea took illustrated perfectly some quotations Judy had gathered from a historic description of the Lovefeast. They were written in the late nineteenth century, by the suffragist and Labour movement activist Hannah Mitchell (1871-1956), who was born and raised on Alport Farm. Hannah wrote a leaflet about the Lovefeast; she also described it at length in her autobiography, *The Hard Way Up*, which was published posthumously.

“We would like to make contact with those whose families have been part of the Alport Lovefeast and Woodlands over the years,” Judy says. “We have set up a Facebook page and a blog to share the story.”

The celebration and witness of the Alport Lovefeast continues. As Hannah Mitchell once wrote, “new hands tend the flame”.



3



5

1. Alport Lovefeast 2017
2. Side view of the barn, Alport Farm
3. Alport Lovefeast 2017
5. Fruitcake and loving cup, Alport Lovefeast 2017
- 4, 6, 7. Alport Lovefeast from bygone years

Photos: 1,2,3 and 5 © Althea de Carteret, 4,6 and 7 © Judy Skelton



2

Aged men and women tell how as tiny infants they were carried to this service, even as their parents and grandparents were before them, and each year some one or more familiar face is missing. But the sacred fire lit in this solitary spot so long ago is never suffered to die out, new hands tend the flame, new voices raise the Psalm.

From *The Woodlands Lovefeast* by Hannah Mitchell

Come, and let us sweetly join
Christ to praise in hymns divine;
give we all with one accord
glory to our common Lord.

Hands and hearts and voices raise,
sing as in the ancient days,
antedate the joys above,
celebrate the feast of love.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Singing the Faith 646, sung at the Alport Lovefeast

Old revival hymns,
and half-forgotten
choruses were recalled
and sung with fervour;
simple testimonies were
offered and heartfelt
prayers couched in homely
language ascended to the
throne of grace.

From *The Hard Way Up*
by Hannah Mitchell



4

Weeks beforehand my mother spring-cleaned, papered and white-washed, we girls scrubbed and polished inside the house, while the boys painted the window frames and the house doors green. All the farm buildings were whitewashed inside, the doors painted a clean stone colour. The yard was swept, the gardens weeded, even the big stone water-trough was emptied and scrubbed, until when refilled it sparkled as if set with diamonds.

From *The Hard Way Up* by Hannah Mitchell

At one o'clock the Lovefeast began with the singing of a hymn, 'Jesu lover of my soul' being the favourite, and prayer followed by the breaking of bread. Baskets filled with substantial slices of cake were handed round by the stewards. Each person took a portion and a draught of water from the vessels offered, then the meeting was open for all to bear testimony to the faith they professed.

From *The Hard Way Up* by Hannah Mitchell



6

The 2019 Lovefeast takes place at 1.30pm on Sunday 6 July.

For more on the Lovefeast, see Woodlands Chapel's blog: woodlandschapel.wordpress.com/

Visit Woodlands Chapel's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/hopewoodlands/

Mitchell, Hannah. *The Hard Way Up: The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel* (Kindle Edition). Endeavour Press.

Douglas, Ed and Beatty, John. *Kinder Scout: The People's Mountain*. ISBN 978-1-911342-50-2.



7



A Bristol pilgrimage

Over a hot couple of days in July, a group of 15 pilgrims from Wrexham made their first 'Bristol Pilgrimage'.

"I've led a number of pilgrimages in the past, and my concern is always to see them in the context of mission," explained the Revd Richard Sharples, the group leader. "I wanted to pick up the story of John and Charles Wesley in Bristol, preaching in the open air for the first time following their conversion experiences after the disappointment of their first mission to America. Urged by George Whitefield, John Wesley came to Bristol in the spring of 1739, and – in his own words – 'submitted to be more vile' by adopting the practice of preaching outdoors, which neither brother had done before. At Hanham Mount, on the east side of Bristol, John preached to huge crowds.

"A few miles outside Bristol is Pill, from where Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke set sail for America following John Wesley's call for missionaries to support and strengthen the fledgling Methodist cause. Far more successful than the Wesleys' previous mission, from here Asbury and Coke established Methodism as a major international movement."

The pilgrimage began with a walk from Kingswood to Hanham

Mount, where the group held prayers. They then walked five miles along the River Avon to the New Room in Bristol City Centre. The pilgrims stayed overnight at Parkway Methodist Church, then set out on the second day to walk from the New Room to Pill. They walked the seven or so miles along Bristol's waterfront, under the Severn Bridge and along the Avon Gorge.

One unexpected highlight for the pilgrims was stopping for prayers in the middle of Corn Street at The Nails: four historic stone pedestals used by the merchants of Bristol to display samples of wares, and on which deals were struck (hence the phrase "paying on the nail"). "I always try to place a story from Scripture alongside the story of the place through which we are walking, and allow the two to throw light on each other," explained Richard. "At The Nails, we remembered the binding commitment Boaz made to Ruth and Naomi."

The pilgrims particularly appreciated the companionship they shared as they travelled together. "The thing that impressed me," commented one, "was the sense of fellowship, especially around the

meal table in the evening."

Sarah Friswell, outgoing Chair of the Methodist Heritage Committee, commented: "There has been a huge rise in interest in pilgrimages in recent years. In April I was privileged to be involved in the 'To be a Pilgrim' conference at Cliff College, exploring pilgrimage as an expression of Methodist spirituality. My own understanding of pilgrimage has deepened over the years, and it is inextricably linked to heritage and mission. Place, journey, companions, the community through which you pass: pilgrimage is also crucially about yourself – where you have come from and how your faith might be challenged today."

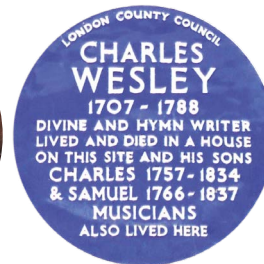
The Methodist Heritage website offers some ideas for pilgrimages in both rural and urban areas. These include Isaac's Tea Trail in Northumberland (see www.methodistheritage.org.uk/isaacsteatrail.htm) and the Wesley Walk in London (www.methodistheritage.org.uk/londonwalkingtour.htm).

(Photo left) The pilgrims at The Nails, Corn Street, Bristol.

(Right) The pilgrims at Hanham Mount

Photos: © the Revd Richard Sharples

Charles Wesley and Marylebone



Charles Wesley moved from Bristol to Marylebone in the West End of London in 1771. At the time, the area was semi-rural but it developed rapidly in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The new residents would have seen Charles riding his grey mare three miles across fields to John Wesley's chapel on City Road, probably composing hymns as he went. The site of the house in Wheatley Street where Charles and his family lived displays a blue plaque in his memory.

Hinde Street Methodist Church is less than ten minutes' walk away. For many years, its members have joined with the parish church of

St Marylebone to commemorate Charles and his brother John in the Aldersgate Service held in May in the Memorial Gardens, close to the parish church. In 1788, Charles was buried in the graveyard adjoining St Marylebone. His widow Sarah and their eldest son Charles eventually joined him, and in 1858 the Methodist Conference erected an obelisk in the churchyard in their memory.

From 1952 until 2005 there was a beautiful memorial garden with the obelisk in its centre. The graves were then moved 25 yards to make way for the development of St Marylebone School. In 2007, a ceremony was held

to rededicate the graves and obelisk in a new redesigned garden.

Hinde Street Church enjoyed more celebrations of Charles Wesley last July with the publication of a new hymn book, *Wesley Hymns*, designed to supplement *Singing the Faith*. *Wesley Hymns* rediscovers and restores 98 lost gems, including some that have been out of print for many years, and music to accompany them. Copies can be ordered direct at a special price of £18 from Hinde Street Church, 19 Thayer Street, London W1U 2QJ (cheques payable to Hinde Street Methodist Church) or www.hindestreet.org.uk/wesleyhymns

Ann Cotterrell and Alan Brooks

Millie and Tom Skinner: two extraordinary Methodist Heritage champions

When Millie Skinner died on 5 May 2018 at the age of 103, Methodism's archives lost the remaining half of their longest-serving duo. Millie and her husband Tom were founding members in 1965 of what became the West Midlands Methodist History Society, and they remained stalwarts until they died.

Millie lived in Solihull all her life and met Tom through Methodist contacts. They married in 1944 at Solihull Methodist Church, before joining Lyndon Methodist Church, where they were members of the Church Council. Millie was also a communion steward and a lieutenant in the Girls' Brigade. They were blessed with two children, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Millie and Tom held their various offices with conscientious meticulousness; nothing they ever did was slipshod. Tom was the Elmdon Methodist Circuit Archivist, a position he undertook assiduously until his death in 2002.

Tom and Millie were active politically too. The local councillors and former MP attending Millie's funeral commented on the passionate support, time and energy they gave. At the last General Election, when Millie was 100, she was featured on the *Midlands Today* television programme, stuffing envelopes for distribution in Birmingham. In the same year, she received the Solihull Local Hero Award.

Born at the beginning of World War 1, Millie lived courageously in faith through all the vicissitudes of a long and full life.

Amelia Frances Skinner, 1914-2018
Thomas Kenneth Skinner ISM, 1913-2002

Diane Webb and the Revd Donald H Ryan



Millie and Tom at their wedding in 1944

Diary dates

The Churches Visitor and Tourism Association Symposium and AGM

13 October, the Old Palace, Worcester,
10am-3.30pm

This year's theme is 'Partnering: We cannot do it all on our own!' Tickets: Members £25, non-members £35. Book before 4 October. For further details, see www.cvta.org.uk

Anglican-Methodist Covenant Conference

30 November, Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History

See www.brookes.ac.uk/hpc/research/oxford-centre-for-methodism-and-church-history/events/ for details.

Methodist Studies Seminar

8 December, the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham

For details, see www.mwrc.ac.uk/methodist-studies-seminars/

Manchester Wesley Research Centre Annual Lecture

18 June 2019, Nazarene Theological College, Manchester

The 2019 lecture will be given by Dr Chris E W Green, Associate Professor of Theology, Pentecostal Theological Seminary. For details, see www.mwrc.ac.uk/mwrc-annual-lecture/

SAVE THE DATE: Susanna 350

12-14 July 2019, Cliff College, Derbyshire

Next year marks the 350th anniversary of the birth of Susanna Wesley. There will be many events to celebrate this important year, but readers should also take note of the first residential Methodist Heritage conference since 2015. Booking will open early next year on the Methodist Heritage website: www.methodistheritage.org.uk

A tale of two pulpits: Gloucester and George Whitefield

St John's Northgate Methodist Church in the heart of Gloucester has become the temporary home of the pulpit from St Mary de Crypt Church, where George Whitefield preached his first sermon.

This important historical artefact is now sited on the south wall at St John's Northgate and will remain there until the £2 million regeneration project work at St Mary de Crypt in Southgate Street is completed.

Now at St John's, the St Mary de Crypt pulpit joins the Northgate pulpit, once a triple-decker construction, from which both John Wesley and George Whitefield preached. In the 1730s Whitefield, having just been ordained a deacon at 21, was invited to preach at St Mary de Crypt, where he had originally

been baptised. The power of his vocal delivery in preaching was to become famous both in the UK and the USA.

Over the years, Gloucester receives hundreds of tourists, particularly from the USA. Now until it is returned to St Mary de Crypt visitors to the City will be able to see both pulpits under one roof.

(Photo left) St John's Northgate Methodist Church Gloucester – Whitefield pulpit on loan from St Mary de Crypt, Gloucester

(Right) St John's Northgate Methodist Church, Gloucester – both Wesley and Whitefield preached from this pulpit

Photos: © David Bennett

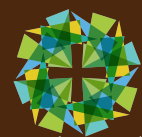


The deadline for submission of articles for the spring 2019 newsletter is 7 January 2019. Please send your ideas to: **Owen Roberts, Methodist Heritage Officer, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR** Tel: 020 7467 5164 Email: robertso@methodistchurch.org.uk

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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