

THE Beckoner

The Magazine
For Beckminster
Methodist Church

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2017

PRICELESS!



I do like to be beside the seaside *West Bay - Dorset*

Photo by Gordon Nicklin

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Steward's Musings

My February/March 2017 Musing tried to explain the Stationing Process, which the Wolverhampton Circuit had been involved in during 2016 and into 2017, in the attempt to appoint three new ministers. It informed you that a successful match was made in Round 1 at the beginning of November for the vacancy to replace Revd Ian Heath, who is moving to take up a circuit superintendent position in Oldham. Revd Dr Joanne Cox-Darling will be taking over ministerial responsibility for Codsall, Brewood and Coven from September. She is moving from the London area, where she has spent the last few years out of circuit while working for the Connexion.

A profile for a probationer presbyter had been put in for Springdale and Wombourne churches, as Revd Chris Collins takes over from Revd David Lavender at Darlington Street, as well as having responsibility for Stratton Street and East Park. This profile was unsuccessful, but we were offered a minister from another conference, and subsequently Revd Teddy Siwila from the United Church of Zambia was appointed. He will be arriving with his wife Muulo and their two youngest sons Wila (16) and Salifyanji (10) in August.

The third profile entered, which was for a minister with responsibility for Beckminster and Fordhouses had failed to gain a match during Rounds 1 and 2. A 3rd Round in January also failed to make a suitable match, and the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) and our Stationing/Invitation Committee were deliberating how ministerial support could be given during 2017/8 to these two churches, plus Fallings Park following the late curtailment of Revd Ruth Reynolds-Tyson. But doesn't God often move in mysterious ways!

In late January a 0.5 (half-time) profile was made available to our District from Revd Paul Nzacahayo, who is presently working as a Methodist tutor at Queens Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham. He has worked there since 2015, but his appointment there is being reduced to part-time. Prior to taking up this tutor position, Paul, who originates from Rwanda, had worked in the Stour Valley circuit as their superintendent from 2004 to 2007, and then in the enlarged Vale of Stour circuit up to 2015. Revd Rachel Parkinson (Chair of the District), in her wisdom, felt his gifts and talents would be best suited to a position in the Wolverhampton circuit and with responsibility for just Beckminster. A revised presbyter profile was duly entered and following a visit to meet representatives of our circuit and

church, a successful match with Paul was made. So from September Paul will continue to work at Queens on Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week, plus one week-end each month, with the rest of his week being given to his circuit appointment. Beckminster's Leadership Team, plus other representatives of the church community, who met Paul, his wife Helene and children Price (24) and Chris (22) were impressed by his grace, wisdom, due diligence and decorum. We sensed that he could be the right minister for Beckminster at this particular time in our mission journey.

Subsequently, our incoming superintendent minister Revd Steve Jackson, has secured some ministerial support for Fordhouses and Fallings Park. This has been achieved by arranging for two supernumerary ministers to help our circuit out. Revd Steve Singleton will provide one day a week, along with preaching time to Fordhouses, with Revd Robert Readshaw offering similar at Fallings Park, both for the next twelve months.

Please note that the formal time to meet and greet our three new ministers to Wolverhampton will be at the Welcome Service on Sat 2 Sept, 3.00pm, at Codsall Methodist Church.

Our circuit CLT and Stationing/Invitation Committee are already focussed on issues surrounding the 2017/8 Stationing Process. Two of our remaining ministers are completing their five year appointments in Aug 2018. Revd Mark Sherman, who presently has responsibility for Lanesfield, Bilston, Bradley and Stow Lawn churches, has decided to not seek re-invitation. While Revd Seija Wallace, who has held the ecumenical appointment in Whitmore Reans with joint responsibility for Cranmer and St Andrews C of E church, is to step down (retire). This ecumenical position is unlikely to continue in the future. This leaves seven churches in our circuit, the five mentioned above, along with Fordhouses and Fallings Park, who will be hoping for ministerial support from Sept 2018 through the Stationing Process.

I look forward to updating you on how this is progressing in the coming months.

Pete Prescott

(Senior Circuit Steward)

TRAVELLING LIGHT

This summer I have had a new kitchen, which is lovely with sparkling new units, bright decorations and a new oven which also sparkles and which has occupied me somewhat as I discovered how to work the timer. I'd needed a new kitchen as the old one was wonky having served well for twenty years. However, I initially was very reluctant to have the new kitchen because it meant I had to empty the old one. I am not renowned for the minimalist approach and so there was lots of stuff to go through – tins that were years past their 'sell-by' date and gadgets and utensils I'd forgotten I had and, more importantly, forgotten what they were for. I disposed of some, not enough I fear, and the rest were put into containers in the spare bedroom. This meant much climbing of stairs with heavy loads. It was hard work and I'm grateful for the help I had.

We are now in the season when ministers change circuits. It is not an easy time. They have to move house and leave the community they have served, and where they have shared deeply in people's lives, being loved and loving and then go to a strange place to start again! It is a time when things are disposed of so they can travel more lightly. It is often a difficult and stressful time.

I remember when we retired and came to Wolverhampton again. We disposed of half of our possessions, with much argument about which books we would keep and which dispose of. (I thought Roland's could go and mine should stay and he the reverse – so we had to compromise.) But as the years have passed we have collected more again so the process of discarding never ceases.

There is also the question of holidays and packing luggage. How much do I need and how much shall I take? It may be hot or it may be cold. It may be sunny or it may be wet. Will it all be casual or shall I need to look smart? It reminds me of a friend who was telling me about a holiday she had travelling across Europe, by train, with only a small rucksack containing only essentials. She travelled light.

Refugees have no choice but to travel light.



They leave behind homes, possessions and people they love. They leave behind their heritage, the country they love, the society that nurtured them. Often the few things they manage to set out with, reminding them of home, are lost on the journey. They come in fear and hope, seeking to build new lives.

I hope never to have to make that sort of journey but maybe it helps us to reflect on our addiction to things, to possessions. What do we need? What do we want? What do we treasure? Most of us have treasures, things that have our history in them, that were precious gifts to us from those we love or that were made for us with love, things that evoke special memories. However, we ought not to be chained to them or by them. I think of Marley's ghost in *A Christmas Carol*, wearing the chain he forged in life, made because he only cared about making money and neglecting society. He did not care about his unfortunate neighbours.

The Gospel calls us to travel light. That is hard to do. It is hard to do in times of austerity and uncertainty. We want security for ourselves and those we love. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells us not to worry about life, what we shall eat or drink or what we shall wear. We are to strive first for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are, as a community, to love God, love our neighbours and our enemies and to care for one another. What we have is ours to share.

Rev Glennys Bamford

To Laugh or Not to Laugh

In her address to the recent Methodist Conference Jill Baker, the newly-installed Vice President, devoted the first part of it to a recognition of the importance of laughter in the Christian life. She cited the fact that her father was attracted to his university MethSoc by the sound of laughter emanating from their meetings, and as a result became a Christian and then quoted the lady in very poor health who said "God has given me a sense of humour so that I can cope with life". Jill then asked if we ever considered laughter as a mission strategy and observed that we seem to suppress or ignore the rich humour in some of the stories that Jesus told.

She drew on the Genesis story of Sarah, whose life as the wife of Abraham was hardly a bed of roses, traipsing round the desert and being handed over to other men to protect him, not to mention being rejected by him at one point. When, (at the age of ninety!) she learned she was to bear a son, she laughed, and when he was born named him Isaac, or Laughter. But Jill went on to say that sometimes laughter has to give way to lament, an assertion made more poignant by her disclosure that her son took his own life at the age of 18. But she still said "we love laughter, we need laughter, we accept laughter as a gift from God, let's make it our aim to laugh more".

Her words struck a chord with me as I have always regarded our sense of humour as one of God's greatest gifts. We are after all the only species, as far as we know, endowed with this capacity for laughter. Those television images of horses and dogs apparently laughing are merely facial images and not signs of genuine amusement. Humour can help us get through many of life's awkward situations. Comedians often confess they developed their ability to make folk laugh as a defence mechanism against bullies and other unpleasant aspects of life.. I am sure we can all recall occasions where a joke or humorous remark has defused a difficult situation. I relied upon humour many times in my working life, especially in awkward or potentially contentious negotiations. Even



I THINK THAT YOU HAVE SOME SERIOUS FAITH ISSUES

church meetings have been known to benefit from a well-timed light hearted contribution!

It has to be said that in the past the church has not been in the forefront of bringing jollity to the nation. The nonconformist denominations, in particular, have frequently been perceived as narrow minded and have seemed to emphasise the negative aspects of Christian belief – the "thou shalt nots" rather than the "thou shalt". This view was reinforced by the (admittedly strictly posed) photos of Methodist worthies in the past with their solemn demeanour; worthy citizens no doubt but hardly likely to be the life



"I wasn't always as religious as I am now. For years I thought the Ten Commandments were a doo-wop group from the 1950's!"

and soul of the party. The impression was certainly conveyed that a belief in God meant saying farewell to the pleasures of life. Yet Jesus always emphasised the positives in life and used humour in his teachings. The gospels record that he took his hearers to task for noting the mote ((i.e. speck) in their brother's eye while ignoring the plank of wood in their own. It is refreshing that many of our preachers are no longer averse to using humour to get over their message, and even in funerals and memorial services it isn't unknown for the eulogies to include some light-hearted references to the departed. I can't think that such services have been diminished in any way by this trend, in fact rather the reverse since humour was often an essential part of the life of the loved one.

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**"I don't know all Ten Commandments.
The only ones I remember are 'settle down',
'act your age' and 'take that out of your mouth'."**



All this begs the question "what is a sense of humour?" We all like to think we possess one. To accuse someone of lacking a sense of humour is a worse insult than telling a man he is a lousy driver. Even such monstrous characters as Hitler and Stalin would claim to have possessed one. After all, there are many photographs of them laughing, but one suspects that anyone having the audacity to accuse them of lacking humour would not have survived very long. For it is hard to imagine them laughing at themselves and it seems to me that this is the true test. Much comedy consists of making fun of the misfortunes of others, but the ability to laugh at our own is surely the real measure.

There are those who still maintain that religion is a serious business in which humour has no

part; but surely this is a distortion of God's love, since he bestowed a capacity for humour on His people.

Others question whether one should make fun of religion but this is to underestimate the strength of our faith. If we are capable of appreciating a joke against ourselves it is inconceivable that God Himself would be unable to do so. The Jews, in particular (with the possible exception of the extreme orthodox variety), would have no truck with the idea that faith and humour don't mix. They take the view that God appreciates a joke as much as we ourselves. Rabbi Lionel Blue, with his gentle humour on the BBC 'Thought for the Day', surely did more than anyone to communicate the beliefs of Judaism.

Let me, as Lionel used to do, conclude with a joke.

Young Johnny, fed up with the continuous crying of his baby brother, asked where he came from. His mother replied "From Heaven, of course". Johnny thought about this for a moment and then said "Well I can understand why they threw him out!"

Let us follow Jill's exhortation and make it our aim to laugh more in celebrating our faith.

Alan Causer

Letters from Bethlehem

- 10 Hunger Strikers

For the weeks following Easter Bethlehem's Manger Square looked very different to how it looks at Christmas time, when it is seen across the world. In the place of a Christmas Tree and crib there was a sculpture of a man in a cage.

An area was marked off for people to listen to speeches, and a tent provided some shelter from the heat of the sun. Not far away on the Hebron Road stood another tent and a third tent was in Dheisheh Refugee Camp. What they all had in common was the picture of Marwan Barghouti and alongside him many pictures of hunger strikers in Israeli jails. For 39 days between Easter Monday and Ramadan large numbers of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails maintained a hunger strike, led by Marwan Barghouti. Bethlehem saw a day long general strike, and two "days of rage" over that time. The numbers of hunger strikers was disputed.

Palestinians said that one thousand seven hundred took part, Israel puts the number as

around twelve hundred. Whoever you believe that is a lot of men (and a few women, - there are a lot less Palestinian women than men held in Israeli jails) - to go on a hunger strike.

The numbers of Palestinians held in Israeli jails varies considerably depending upon the tensions at the time. Figures quoted recently suggest that there are about 7,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails of which at least 1,000 are held under "administrative detention." This means that they have not been convicted of any crime. Around three hundred are children.

Talk to Palestinians about their leaders and you will get widely diverse views. Many will complain that their leaders are corrupt, that they are divisive, that they represent only parts of the community or that they advocate strategies that they as individuals disagree with. Some because they support violence, others because they don't support violence. The one man almost universally respected across those who support Fatah, those who support the smaller parties and those who support Hamas is Marwan Barghouti. He is widely tipped to be the successor to Mahmoud Abbas. Some call him the Palestinian Mandela. Recently Archbishop Desmond Tutu nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

I have recently returned from Gaza. While there we visited the Solidarity Camp for the Hunger Strikers in the centre of Gaza City. Again there at it's heart were picture of the hunger strikers including Marwan Barghouti.

Who is this man? To Israel he is a murderer - arrested in 2002, tried and convicted on charges of murder and sentenced to five life sentences. Israel considers that he directed numerous attacks on military and civilian targets. They say that he was the leader of the first and second intifadas (or uprisings).

His trial was one of the most controversial in Israel's history. Barghouti refused to present any defence maintaining that he did not





recognise the legitimacy of the court. Some who have studied the court process by which he was convicted (such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union) say he was denied a fair trial.

One of the significant points made to me by his supporters is that he is on record as writing against attacks on civilians inside Israel. He has argued for violence against the military, maintaining the right of oppressed people to fight for their liberation, (a right recognised in International Humanitarian Law), however during the second intifada when suicide bombers targeted civilians, he distanced himself from such attacks inside Israel which he described as being a future neighbour of the Palestinian State. Controversially he argued that settlers living on occupied Palestinian land in the West Bank were legitimate targets.

To Palestinians Barghouti is a leader that has held on to his principles through many years of imprisonment. His face is as familiar here as Mandela's was in the South Africa of the nineteen seventies. I and most Christians here believe that non violence is the way to achieve a just settlement but Barghouti challenges us. From the non violence of a hunger strike, there is a call that resonates for Palestinians deeply frustrated after fifty years of occupation.

In Israel adverts mocked the hunger strikers and secret videos have been made of Barghouti eating. Not surprisingly the authenticity of these videos have been totally dismissed in Palestine as fake. My impression from those I have spoken to is that no-one takes them seriously. The general comment is "well they (Israel) would do that, wouldn't they!" The hunger strike ended at the beginning of Ramadan. There seem to be considerable dispute about exactly what was agreed to end the strike. The prisoners are to have two visits a month instead of one, that seems clear but Barghouti claims that other concessions were agreed. Israel disputes this. There seems to be some prospect of a further hunger strike in the future because of the disputed outcome.

Once again the Israeli and the Palestinian views of the hunger strike are poles apart. When facts are beyond dispute interpretations of those facts can differ widely, when even the facts are in dispute the field is wide open to diverse views. The ending of the strike left many ambiguities around its outcome even the "facts" are disputed. Bethlehem is not a comfortable place to be at present. Much frustration remains.

Rev. John Howard

“MR. HEARTBEAT”

- NICHOLAS RHEA

Firstly, after my article on ‘Yorkshire Vets’ in the last edition of *The Beckoner*, may I first apologise for writing another one which deals more or less with a similar area of North Yorkshire. However, I might add that at least two of our other regular contributors to our magazine have also quite recently described it as being “God's Own Country”, so I'm not alone. Yorkshire is certainly a county of contrasts ranging from the industrial and urban conurbations of South and West Yorkshire to the sweeping landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors national parks, lapped in the east by a dramatic coastline of contrasts from Spurn Head in the south to Saltburn-by-the-Sea, just below Teesside in the north. Along the coastline is a plethora of well-known seaside resorts and fishing ports, both large and small, which have attracted countless numbers of visitors over the years.

Elaine and I are most fortunate in that we have a close friend who lives in the quiet resort of Filey and we usually make two visits every year to spend a few days with her in that lovely area. On our last visit towards the end of April, we were able to further explore some of our favourite haunts such as Scarborough, Whitby and Bridlington as well as some of the historic market towns as Beverley, Driffild and Helmsley. However, on our last visit I opened a copy of the *Yorkshire Post* one morning to spot a news item and report that a well-known author had just died.

His name was Peter Walker, which may not ring any bells with most of our readers but, if I use his nom-de-plume of Nicholas Rhea then some may recognise him as the author of the many ‘Constable’ books – which were later turned into the popular television drama series called *Heartbeat*. He was a prolific writer and wrote around 130 books over the past forty years or so and his amazing writing career was rooted in the application of his own experiences – whether it be as a village bobby's point of view, a Yorkshire villager, a police press officer or father of four children.



Peter Walker was born the son of an insurance agent and teacher in the North York Moors village of Glaisdale. The oldest of three children, he won a scholarship to Whitby Grammar School but left at sixteen to become a police cadet. In 1956 he joined the North Yorkshire force as a beat bobby in Whitby. He also began to write seriously after years of casual interest, having had his first short story published in the *Police Review*.

Three years later he moved to the region's Police Headquarters in Northallerton before, in 1964, being posted to Oswaldkirk, about twenty miles north of York, as village bobby. He was soon moved again as an instructor at the police training school in 1967. This happened to be the same year as his first novel, *Carnaby and the Hijackers*, was published. Not long after, he was promoted to sergeant in 1968 and became a police inspector in 1976. At the same time, he was appointed into the dual role of press and public relations officer.

Peter Walker (Nicholas Rhea) retired from the police in 1982 after thirty years of service in order to concentrate on his writings, encouraged from an interest in his *Constable* series of books by Yorkshire Television. By that

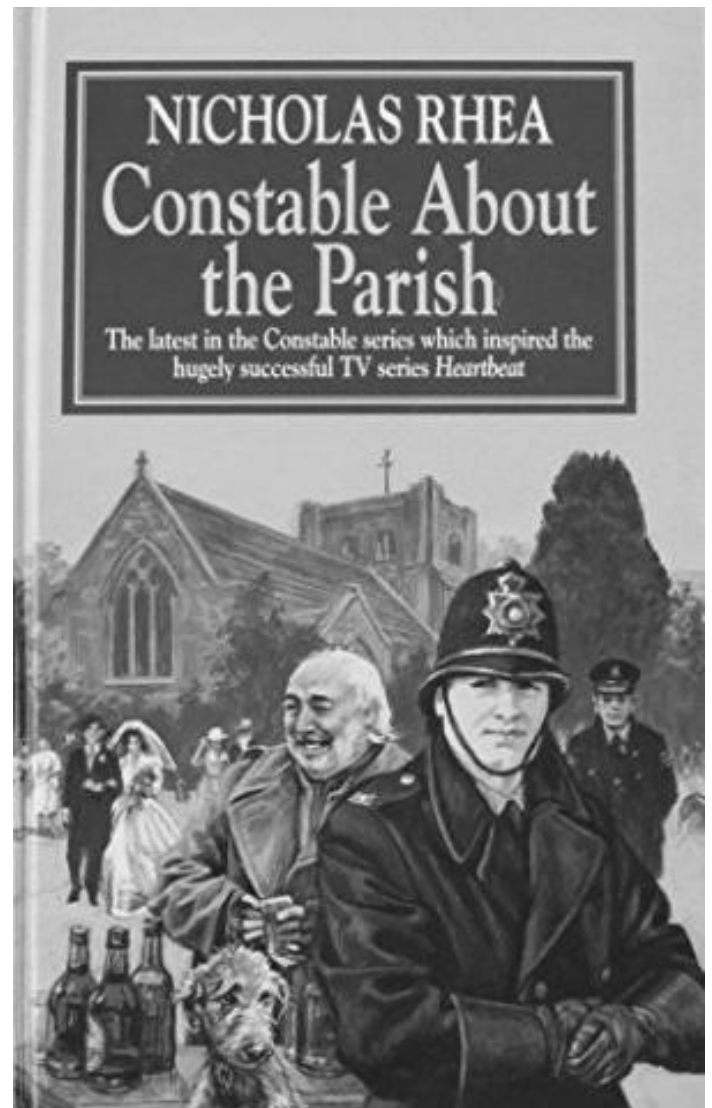
time he had already written three dozen books on that particular theme, much of it based on his own experiences of policing and his own home life and surroundings. It had all really begun in the village of Oswaldkirk, where the North York Moors meets with the Howardian Hills (the area in which the famous Castle Howard is also sited a few miles away).

The Catholic church in the village of Oswaldkirk is St Aidan's and this was to give its name to the fictional village of *Aidensfield*, where he was to set his police stories. Eventually life began to imitate art so he and his wife Rhoda moved into the neighbouring village of Ampleforth (near where the large Roman Catholic college is sited) and was to live there for most of his life until ill-health finally forced him into St Leonard's Hospice in York earlier this year.

For many years, *Heartbeat* was to become one of the most popular series on television and extended to 372 episodes over eighteen seasons. These are still often shown on digital Freeview channels on a very regular basis. The various series were a huge success because they reflected all the qualities that had made Peter Walker (Nicholas Rhea) special. He had undoubtedly a real passion for people and an understanding of them and their frailties. He also had a genuine love of the local countryside with a deep desire to keep all these elements together. He was also to inject a great deal of Yorkshire humour into his writings as portrayed by some of his more comic characters.

Some of the people he had once met 'on the beat' were the ones who would later emerge and live in and around *Aidensfield* (in reality the village of Goathland, sited a few miles inland from Whitby). There were folk such as the grouchy rogue, *Claude Greengrass* (played by actor and comedian Bill Maynard); the put-upon desk Sergeant, *Oscar Blaketon* (Derek Foulds); the debonair but sharp-eyed *PC Nick Rowan* (Nick Berry) and barmaid *Gina* (Tricia Penrose). These were just some of the original cast but many other actors were later introduced as the various series progressed.

By the mid-1990s the village of Goathland, on the edge of the North York Moors, had become a major draw for tourists and groups. Other well-known local sites were also often used in various film sequences such as Whitby, Robin



Hood's Bay, Staithes, Grosmont station - for scenes shot on the North Yorkshire Moors (steam) Railway, and many other hamlets and sites in the vicinity.

Sadly Peter Walker passed away earlier in April this year. It was however rather a quirk of coincidence that the hundreds of cyclists taking part in this year's three day event *Tour de Yorkshire* actually passed through Goathland on the third day of the race (I happened to have already seen the start of this on Bridlington seafront two day's earlier). Perhaps even more poignant was the fact that it was also due to pass through Whitby at the same time as Peter's funeral was taking place in a local church in the town. The race drew thousands of visitors and other spectators to these areas over the three-day period. The same might also be said of the writings of Nicholas Rhea and the subsequent series of *Heartbeat* which have and still do attract many thousands of people to this beautiful area.

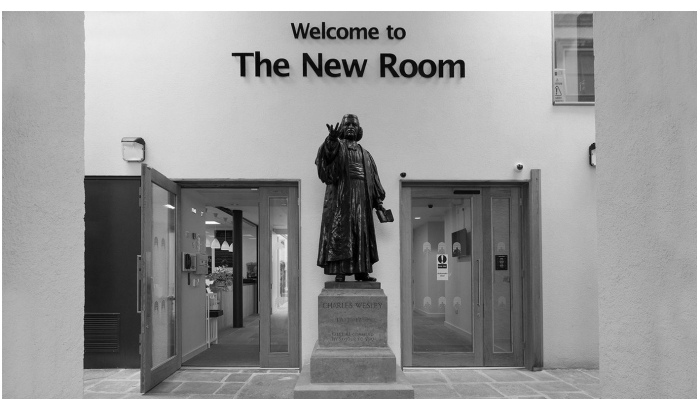
Keith Cheetham

THE NEW ROOM

I recently was honoured with an invitation to attend the official opening of the New Room project in Bristol by H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester. For those unaware, the New Room name is a bit ambiguous as it is one which was derived from the days of John Wesley when it was then the very first Methodist place of worship he ever built. To Wesley and his followers it was of course 'the new room'. Up to that point John Wesley had been preaching in the open air due to the fact that no church would offer him a pulpit.

In May 1739 he bought a small piece of land in Bristol's Horsefair where he intended to build a room which could be used by the growing societies being formed from his new converts from the Anglican Church or earlier non-believers. His brother Charles was initially unhappy with John's preaching in the open air but still supportive of what he considered was the work of God. Working together, John and Charles were to become joint leaders of the Methodist Revival and divided responsibility for Bristol and London between them.

On Sunday 3 June 1739 members of two Bristol societies met for the first time in the shell of what was to become known as the New Room. It became not only a centre for worship but also somewhere that John Wesley could train his lay preachers, introduce a dispensary for the sick and also provide a book room. However, the building soon proved too small to cope with the numbers of people involved so plans were



made to enlarge the centre. (This was not completed until 1784 when the building was first licensed for public worship.) An enlarged building of 1748 included a chapel, accommodation for visiting preachers, rooms for John and Charles and also stabling for horses. John also provided it as a place for education of the poor, giving help to those in need, and both medical help and medicines (mainly herbal remedies) to those who otherwise could not afford them. For the remainder of his life the New Room was the centre of John Wesley's activity in the South West and Wales. Eighteen of his annual Conferences were held there, including the last one he attended in 1790.

The New Room (now a Grade 1 Listed Building) stands in a quiet oasis off the busy shopping thoroughfares in Bristol city centre. An equestrian statue of John Wesley by sculptor A. Gordon Walker stands in the forecourt, just

off Broadmead, whilst a statue of Charles Wesley in preaching mode by Brook Hitch has recently been cleaned and re-erected in a grand entrance from the Horsefair. This is all part of a major overhaul of the building to make it more visitor-friendly as an important Visitor Centre and Museum. Various new innovations have recently taken place as well as older ones being refurbished or brought up to modern-day usage. The former red-pantiled roof of the stable has been retained with the effigy of a white horse looking across the stable door. It is a welcoming feature in the Courtyard as worshippers and visitors arrive at what is now the oldest Methodist building in the world – The New Room (also known as 'John Wesley's Chapel').

The Chapel itself is kept as it was in the 18th century when the large congregation would stand (or sit on the benches – no pews in those days!) to hear the preaching. The Pulpit from which the preacher would speak on Sundays is at a level of more seating in the Gallery. At this point in the Gallery is a unique Snetzler organ and you can look down into the chapel and across to a clock given by John Wesley himself.

Visitors can go up to the Preachers Rooms above the chapel where early Methodist preachers such as Francis Asbury, Dr. Thomas Coke, Adam Clarke, John Fletcher, Captain John Webb and others all rested. In addition one can see the accommodation once occupied by both John and Charles. There is John's bedroom and study along with his preaching gown, bed, chairs, pictures and books. It is in these rooms and additional exhibition space that one can see some excellent tableaux, paintings, drawings, artefacts and other features connected with early Methodism. Not the least is information about John Wesley's support for William Wilberforce with his campaign to rid the world of slavery.

In addition, under the new re-development there is a book room, study centre, souvenir shop, toilets, a very useful lift and a very attractive café with adequate seating for groups. The Official Opening of the Visitor Centre and Museum by His Royal Highness took place on 13 July 2017 in a crowded chapel of Methodist notables including the President of the Conference, representatives from the American and South Korean Methodist Churches, civic heads and other denominations. In summing



up, every congratulation must be showered on Gary Best, Warden of the New Room, who masterminded the whole scheme with his team, and my colleague David Worthington, Manager of the complex, who has worked with the developers and builders on a day-to-day basis. They and their trustees, chaired by Rev. Ward Jones (a former Black Country man!) can all be proud of their achievements as their efforts to improve this historic site will ensure it is well-prepared to welcome many more international visitors from both home and abroad. If you happen to be in the Bristol area, do make every effort to see what has been achieved to preserve and enhance this shrine to Methodism. You'll be amazed at what has taken place! (More information from website: www.newroombristol.org.uk)

Keith Cheetham

BECKMINSTERAMA

Open Way

Alternate Tuesdays at 8pm



Dates and venues to be advised in Church Notices.

Contact Hilda Evans Tel: 421777

Monday Focus

Everyone is welcome to join us at Monday Focus at 8pm on Mondays in the Beckminster Coffee Bar.

Sept 4 'Observation Beehive'
Phil Healey

Sept 18 The Gift of Life
- Human Organ Donations
Rev. Alison Geary

Contacts: Ann Holt Tel: 650812
Margaret Nicklin Tel: 742537

Emmaus Group

Meet Thursdays at 7.45 pm. All welcome
Contact: Janet Anderson Tel: 337404

Sept 7 222 Jeffcock Road
Oct 26 9 Alderdale
Nov 23 4 Highlands Road
Dec 14 32 Church Hill

MESSY CHURCH (I)

Monthly — Fridays
3.30 - 5.45 pm. Fun for all the family
Contact Wendy Ashwood Tel: 831637

This is a typical week in the life of Beckminster Methodist Church.

- All groups meet at the church unless otherwise stated
- New members are always welcome at any group

Sunday

10.30am Crèche and Junior Church
10.30am Morning Worship
6.30pm Evening Worship

Monday

9.30 - 12.30pm Art Group
10.30am Prayer Meeting
2.00 - 4.00pm Art Group
6.15pm Brownies
8.00pm Monday Focus

Tuesday

9.45am The Toddler Group
1.30pm Art Group
4.15pm Dinky Divas 'N' Dudes
6.15pm Brownies
8.00pm Open Way

Wednesday

11.00am Luncheon Club
5.45pm Rainbows
6.30pm 'Soaring Spirits'
7.30pm Horticultural Society
7.30pm Happy Feet Dance Group

Thursday

9.45am The Toddler Group
2.00 - 4.00pm Take a Break
5.00 - 6.00pm Tai Chi
7.45pm Emmaus Group
7.00 - 9.00pm St. John's Ambulance

Friday

3.30pm Monthly Messy Church
7.00-9.00pm Gateway Group (weekly)

Saturday

Communion Services

The sharing of bread and wine takes place on four Sundays a month, either during the morning or evening worship or as an early Sunday morning service at 9.00am on first and third Sundays. Everyone is welcome.

Girls Uniformed Organisations

Rainbows 5 – 7 yrs

Wednesdays 5.45pm

Brownies 7-10 yrs

Mondays & Tuesdays 6.15pm

Various activities according to age – include crafts, cooking, badge work, swimming, service to others, pack holidays, hikes and camps.

Contact: Julie Tonks

Tel: 01952 461006



Take a Break

Thursdays weekly during term times

2.00 – 4.00pm

Indoor bowling. For people wanting to meet new friends and try something different. All welcome.

Contact: David Jones

Tel: 762408



Crèche and Sunday Club

Whilst the crèche allows parents of very young children to worship together, Sunday Club explore the Christian faith in exciting ways appropriate to their age.

Toddlers

Tuesdays and Thursdays,

9.45 – 11.15 am.

Approx. 40 Toddlers with Mums, Dads, carers or grandparents meet for mutual support whilst toddlers play.

Contacts:

Barbara Bennett Tel: 341877 (Tuesdays)

Jennifer Cromie Tel: 338320 (Thursdays)



Luncheon Club

Wednesdays 11.00am – 3.00pm

25 housebound people and helpers meet for coffee, lunch and tea. A short entertainment and epilogue. An opportunity to meet people, chat etc to relieve loneliness. A caring service provided by volunteers (who are always needed)

Contact: Tess Davies Tel: 07789 260953

Boys Uniformed Organisations

Beavers 6 – 8 years Thursday 6.15 – 7.15 pm

Cubs 8 – 10 years Monday 6.15 – 7.45 pm

Scouts 10 – 14 years Wednesday 7.00 – 9.00 pm

All groups meet at Scout HQ in Skidmore Avenue, for badge work, crafts, games, various activities and service. Camps.

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Charles Wesley

(1707-1788)



Poet and Hymn Writer (1)

Introduction

The success of the Methodist revival was down to three major factors. Firstly, it was born out of John Wesley's fervent preaching, initially at the great outdoor meetings and later in the chapels built by his followers. Secondly, John's genius for organisation ensured the new societies he founded were carefully nurtured by the leaders he selected in his new class system. Thirdly, the new converts were encouraged and inspired by the hymns of Charles, his brother. The hymns became even more important after John and Charles had died by continuing to convey their message of God's love for all mankind. Many more people have sung Charles' hymns than ever heard John preach or have since read his sermons.

Though Charles is principally celebrated as a hymn writer he originally thought of himself as a poet and even before his conversion he composed what he called "sacred poems". In fact he left behind thirteen volumes of his poetic works. One writer claims to have read 9000 of his poems, a good number of which became hymns, contributing to the 6000 or more he is estimated to have composed. During his life he is known to have written around 180,000 lines of verse, (three times more than Wordsworth, usually regarded as one of our most prolific poets), averaging ten lines of verse each day, and completing a poem every other day.

Some of the surviving manuscripts show evidence of them having been written in the saddle and are therefore less polished than his other work. John gave a fascinating account of how Charles would rush into his house on City Road crying out "pen and ink! pen and ink!"

Upon these being supplied he would write down the hymn he had been composing. When this was done "he would look round on all those present, and salute them with much kindness, ask after their health, give a short hymn and thus put all in mind of eternity".

The First Hymnbook

In the years after their conversion John and Charles produced several small collections of hymns but it was 1780 before John published his famous *Collection of Hymns for the use of People called Methodists*. In his preface John said "it is not so large as to be either cumbersome or expensive; and it is large enough to contain such a variety of hymns as will not soon be worn threadbare". It is generally accepted that most of the hymns were written by Charles but as the brothers apparently agreed that none of the hymns should be attributed to their writers it is impossible to know in some instances which are his. John, who was also a gifted hymn writer, confessed in the Preface to having composed a small number of them and he is known to have edited a number of Charles' compositions. Their hymns often reflect their personalities, John's being expressed in more sober language than Charles' more exuberant outpourings.

It was a remarkable collection. In fact one distinguished scholar, Bernard Manning, a Congregationalist, said of it "This little book - some 750 hymns - ranks in Christian literature with the Psalms, the Book of Common Prayer and the Canon of the Mass. In its own way it is perfect, unapproachable, elemental in its perfection. You cannot alter it except to mar it; it is a work of supreme devotional art by a religious genius". Praise indeed. It included

hymns for every occasion and state of mind, arranged in sections with imaginative titles such as “For Believers Rejoicing” “Backsliders Recovered” and “Exhorting Sinners to return to God”. It also included a superb, very detailed index, giving not only the first lines but also the biblical references in each hymn.

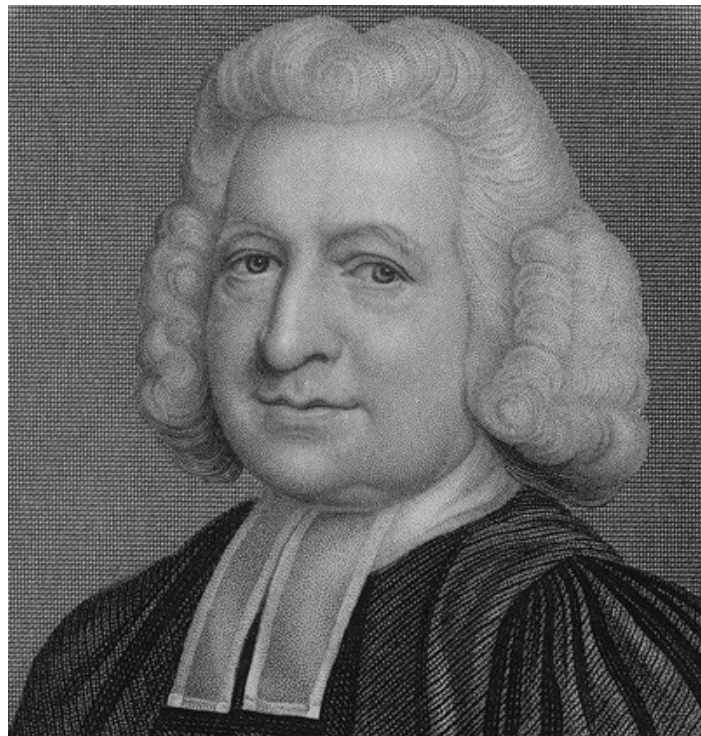
Impetus and Craftsmanship

Great poetry demands two essential qualities – an inner urge, or impetus, and consummate craftsmanship. Charles' religious experience provided the impetus and the craftsmanship came from his Oxford classical training. Had he chosen to confine himself to secular verse there is no doubt he would have been hailed as one of our great poets. In his own day his hymns were considered “too enthusiastic” by those outside the Methodist revival and therefore not given their due as great verse.

Of course his enormous output contained a good deal of dross but at his best he can be classed with the outstanding writers of any age. Some belated recognition has come more recently with the inclusion in the Oxford Book of English Verse of Charles' fourteen verse hymn “Come O thou traveller unknown”, also known as “Wrestling Jacob”. This, together with two other of his great hymns, “And can it be” and “Christ whose glory fills the skies” was also included in the Faber Book of Religious Verse. It was Isaac Watts, the composer of “When I survey the wondrous cross”, considered by many the greatest hymn in the English language, who said that the single poem, “Wrestling Jacob”, was worth all the verse he himself had written.

Teaching

Charles wasn't content to write just great verse. It had to convey the urgent, life-affirming message that God's love was for all and not just the chosen few. This must have been a profoundly affecting message for those living in



the wretched conditions of the mid 18th century, when the average life expectancy was around 40, women frequently died in childbirth and many children never reached their fifth birthday. But Charles' message was not “pie in the sky when you die” but one for action now. When he wrote about death, which he did on numerous occasions, he didn't regard it as life's end but a transition to a higher existence in the company of God. One of his hymns on the subject “Rejoice for a brother deceased, Our loss is his infinite gain” summed up his attitude. But for Charles heaven was also God's love, expressed through the life of Jesus, for everyone – here and now! His hymns were, and still are, expressions in verse of Methodist doctrine, reinforcing the message that John brought to people of Britain in the eighteenth century and followed by many millions since. It is frequently said that Methodists learned their theology from their hymns, so they truly are sermons in verse.

In a later article we will examine some of them in more detail.

Alan Causer



In the Steps of JANE AUSTEN



Eight years ago I was asked by the clergy and staff of Winchester Cathedral if I would help them with a marketing plan to turn one of their ecclesiastical buildings into a residential conference and events centre. Naturally, whilst I was there, I was also shown around the wonderful cathedral, which was actually built in various stages between 1079 to 1532. Apart from its many architectural features, one of its major selling points is that it houses the tomb of distinguished authoress, Jane Austen, who lies under a slab in the north aisle of the nave. She died in a nearby cottage, opposite the West Door of the Cathedral, on 18 July 1817.

However, when she was first buried there in the early morning, only four people attended the funeral. Yet there is no mention on this original stone of her books or fame as a writer. A brass wall plaque was later added close to the tomb to try and put the matter right. However, by 1900, she had become famous enough for a public subscription for a memorial window to be installed and sited just above the brass plate. A small exhibition has also been added to provide more details for visitors.

As many will have realised 2017 is the year of the bi-centenary of Jane's death and numerous commemorative events have already taken place or are being planned, some of which I will outline. Prior to that, let me first give a few details about her background and some of the

places where she lived or had connections. Jane was born on 16 December 1775 in a small Hampshire village called Steventon. The former rectory in which the family lived was demolished during the 1820s and the site is now occupied by a field with very little evidence of any former habitation. The only signs that can be detected is an old well and pump, but now covered by nettles, which once would have stood in the wash house in Jane's time. Not surprising then that most visitors make their way to the local parish church of St Nicholas, where the Rev George Austen, her father, was Rector. Two of her brothers, James and Henry, both became rectors of the same church and later followed by their nephew – Rev William Knight – spanning 114 years in the same family. Her mother was called Cassandra, a name also given to Jane's sister and lifelong friend. She also had five brothers and they all enjoyed a happy childhood together in a large creative family. In their teens both Jane and sister, Cassandra, enjoyed taking part in the social life of the area, attending balls and soirees which undoubtedly were to eventually provide Jane with much future material for her books.

At the age of 25, Jane moved with her family to Sydney Place in Bath, an address to where her father had decided to retire. The two sisters were not very settled in this elegant spa city but would often enjoy visiting seaside resorts on the East Devon and Dorset coasts such as

Sidmouth and Lyme Regis. When Rev George Austen died in 1805, Jane returned with her mother and sister to Hampshire to live in Southampton. Four years later, because of reduced financial circumstances, they moved to a cottage in the village of Chawton, also in Hampshire (this building has since become the Jane Austen Museum). The reason for this was that Jane's brother, Edward, had risen to prominence as a landowner and gentleman and had inherited the estate of Chawton. He was therefore able to provide a home for his mother and two sisters, where most of Jane's successful novels would later be written. (Her writing table, a lock of her hair and other effects are all on view.)

It was here that Jane began taking up writing seriously, working on *Sense and Sensibility* (published 1811), followed by *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* in 1814 and *Emma* a year later. (*Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were not published until after her death.) There is no doubt that when *Pride and Prejudice* was first published, this classic story of marriage, manners and money in Regency England was to become one of the best-loved novels of all time, thanks to its author's witty dialogue, wry observations and wise commentary. It covered a charming social comedy, giving the reader a portrait of family relationships and a look at the English gentry in the 18th century. In so doing, Jane created two of literature's most memorable characters: the delectable Elizabeth Bennet and handsome Mr Darcy (who could forget the memorable TV series of some years ago apart from a later filmed version more recently.)

Devotees of Jane's work usually first head for the village of Chawton and perhaps move on to Winchester. By 1816 Jane was beginning to feel increasingly unwell and she and Cassandra drove the sixteen miles in their carriage to Winchester in the pouring rain. They took up lodgings in College Street, opposite the Cathedral. Their plan was to get help from a celebrated doctor at the newly-established Winchester Hospital. However, her illness, thought to be Addison's disease, began to rapidly worsen. She died in Cassandra's arms, on 18 July 1817, aged 41.

A few weeks ago I happened to be in Lyme Regis where members of staff in the tourist



"Give a girl an education and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well, without further expense to anybody."

Jane Austen

information centre described to me various aspects of Jane's two visits to the resort (in Autumn 1803 and August 1804, when they rented a house in Broad Street). Jane wrote that with her sister, Cassandra, they had danced at the Assembly Rooms, walked on the Cobb and bathed in the sea. Apparently, no less a person than the poet and writer, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, later came to the town seeking out the various sites connected with Jane Austen. The Cobb is perhaps the most prominent landmark and is a curving harbour of hard rock which juts out to sea (a famous scene in *Persuasion* was supposed to have taken place there). Naturally, I followed in Jane's footsteps to the end of this pier which, as one looked back to the coastline, gave me an overall view of the town with its many attractive Regency features.

Hampshire Cultural Trust is co-ordinating the extensive celebrations of the author's life. The Royal Pavilion in Brighton is currently running an exhibition: *Jane Austen by the Sea* to 8 January 2018. The Weston Library, Bodleian Libraries in Oxford is presenting an exhibition: *Which Jane Austen?* At various venues in Bath will be events taking place in *The Jane Austen Festival* and a further exhibition is currently taking place at the Lyme Regis Museum. Apart from Bath and Lyme Regis, other seaside locations visited by Jane include Sidmouth and Dawlish in Devon and both Worthing and Ramsgate in Kent, Jane Austen also spent some time in the spa town of Cheltenham. Not the least for visitors will be the village of Chawton and the place we first started out in Winchester Cathedral. All of these places will be paying their own tribute to one of England's best loved and finest of writers.

Keith Cheetham



(21 year-old Philippa Williamson from Wolverhampton recounts the 100-mile journey she made on foot to raise money for those escaping from the conflict in Syria.)

September, Christmas and June. If you drive along the M6 motorway around these times of year you will likely notice a trend. Cars packed with belongings speed up and down the country transporting the nation's young adults between their home towns and university. It is a seasonal migration pattern, the like you might expect of a fish or bird, and I too have made the journey many times over the last four years while studying at the University of Huddersfield. To mark the end of my studies, I made my final migration of one hundred miles from Huddersfield back home to Wolverhampton by foot to raise money for refugees of the civil war in Syria.

The idea was born from curiosity, while trying to find the cheapest route home for Christmas. Google Maps quotes three days if you walk at least thirty miles each day! Hmm, I think I'll take the train!

That same week, my phone was filled with news of the air strikes on Aleppo. The desperation of civilians was laid bare in front of me and I felt so distanced from those people. Appalled and heartbroken, I realised that many people likely

shared my feelings wanting so badly for this to stop, yet powerless against the actions of government organisations halfway across the world. I hadn't much money but I knew I had all the enthusiasm to make a huge gesture to stir up more funds from my network of friends and family than I could possibly give single-handedly. The idea to walk home floated in again from the back of my mind and I began to make plans for what would become the *Migrate 2017* campaign.

I teamed up with friends Aaron Haviland (22) and Sebastian Belica (23) both of whom would join me on the Walk. The following months involved equipment checks, practice walks, route mapping and reaching out to campsites dotted along the route. The sheer amount of preparation that went into this walk put into perspective for me how disorientating it must have been to flee your home at a moment's notice under the most terrifying of circumstances.

My eyes were opened to the extent of the plight of Syrian Refugees when I visited an exhibition by local photo/journalist Will Wintercross who, along with Brian Cross, founded the Syrian Refugee Relief Fund. This UK-based charity provides aid, shelter, clothing and food to those escaping the conflict in Syria. Inspired by the good they do for the vulnerable, I set out to

raise £3,000 for the charity with *Migrate 2017*.

For the three of us, the journey began on a rainy Saturday morning on the 10 June. Atop the highest point in Huddersfield, we said our “goodbyes” and began walking. After entering the Peak District west of Holmfirth, we joined the Pennine Way and headed south over the moors. As we ventured deeper into the district, the vast moorland became bleaker.

By late afternoon, we noticed that our pace was much slower than we had planned for and our boots had filled with water. We trudged on, steadily climbing until we caught sight of Crowden. The downward slope to our left grew steeper and we soon found ourselves on a 500m cliff edge. After manoeuvring our way down a steep clough, we trudged into the campsite just after half past nine and knew we had a tough four days ahead of us!

Thankfully, the weather was never as bad as it was on that first day. But the walk did not get any easier as our knee and back pain became more exacerbated with each day. The lowest point of our expedition came when we were rejected from staying at our second night campsite, due to our late estimated time of arrival. Over the phone, the owner was cold and unwilling to help us. Ringing up a number of other campsites the answer was the same. For the first time in our journey we felt unwelcome, unable to find anywhere that would take us in.

My mind cast back to the cause. I was aware that this is simply another aspect of life for the displaced citizens of Aleppo, yet feeling the hostility first hand, even for one day, was a disconcerting experience.

My faith in the British public was restored by acts of kindness from strangers we met along the way. A friendly couple showed us somewhere to camp on the Sunday, even offering to take us in for the night should we run into trouble. A lady in Leek gave us directions to Leek Edge Farm who, along with Marsh Farm, let us camp on their grounds for free. We arrived into Wolverhampton to a warm reception, welcomed by friends, family, a local housing agency for refugees and many of their tenants.



Will Wintercross, SRRF Founder in Syria, Summer 2013

At my home in Wolverhampton, we were delighted to return to home comforts, a warm meal and a bed. This was easily the most challenging thing I have ever done, yet I can still only imagine what life must be like for the millions of men, women and children living through this daily. As I write this, our fundraiser total is at £1,447.22 for the Syrian Refugee Fund.

I am incredibly happy and proud of what we have achieved. I only hope that our efforts can go on to change the hearts of the British public and the lives of those most in need.

(To see our story, search [@migrate2017](#) on face book or google.)

Philippa Williamson

Although Philippa's fundraising account has now closed, if people would like to make a donation, they can give direct to the charity, www.srrf.uk.

Don't forget!
copy deadline for
Oct - Nov Issue
Sept 3rd 2017

New York



Nothing ever quite prepares you for New York, 'The city that never sleeps', but it has a buzz and vibrancy about it that somehow draws you back.

On our first brief visit, we went to that icon which epitomises this vibrant city, the Statue of Liberty, but this time it was a visit to Ellis Island, trying to trace relatives who had emigrated for a better life in the USA. Unfortunately, my ancestors had travelled there in the middle of the nineteenth century, too early for Ellis Island which only opened in 1892, the buildings there being completed in 1900.

Grand Central Station, The Metropolitan Museum, Times Square, 5th Avenue, walking around under the shady trees of Central Park in the heat of early September and what could be

a better way to end the day than going to the 'Top of the Rock' (the Rockefeller Building) to see the sun setting over Manhattan.

The main purpose of this visit though was to visit 'Ground Zero' and our visit coincided with the fifteenth anniversary of 9/11.

Our day began with a visit to the new One World Trade Centre Freedom Tower which, at 1,776 feet tall, is now the highest building in the Western Hemisphere. Our elevator soon had us up on the observation deck where we could see the whole of Manhattan spread out before us. It will eventually be joined by several more buildings and just across the street is the magnificent World Trade Centre Calatrava Transit Hub, known as the Oculus which rises from the ground like a giant dove.

In the shadow of all this new building however, lies the outline of the original twin towers, now made into water features and with the names of all 2,996 people who lost their lives engraved in a bronze feature surround. On the birthday of each victim, a white rose is placed in the name etched and the rail is heated during the winter months to stop it from freezing over. It is a very moving experience to see both this and to visit the exhibition and see huge steel girders bent and broken. A steel-beam cross, found on the second day after the disaster, now stands on the east side of the World Trade Area and a





damaged golden sphere stands in nearby Battery Park as permanent reminders of the disaster.

On the Friday there was a memorial service in Battery Park, attended by the Mayor of New York, and on the following Sunday we were in the Catholic Cathedral, where a service was being held for the firefighters lost on that fateful day. At the end of the service the choir, from high up in the gallery, sang 'God Bless America', it was a very moving experience.

There is one small beacon of hope here though and that is the little church of St Paul's which stands in the shadow of the World Trade Centre. Throughout New York's fire of 1776 and during the 9/11 attack, "it stood", becoming a place of refuge – but that is a story for another day!

Ann Holt

The Editorial team would like to correct a mis-spelling of the Bishop of Wolverhampton's name in our last edition after his article on Reconciliation. It is of course Rt. Rev Clive Gregory. Our apologies to Bishop Clive for this error.



RUN *for* NEPAL



The Brigade of Gurkhas has served with the British Army for over two hundred years (1815-2015) and Gurkha Regiments are greatly respected by British people. *Bravest of the Brave* in the past fifty years they have served alongside us in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Borneo, The Falklands, Kosovo, Iraq (both conflicts) and Afghanistan.

The Queen's Gurkha Signals (QGS) is a regular unit of Royal Corps of Signals, one of the combat support arms of the British Army. Together with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers, the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment and the Royal Gurkha Rifles they form part of the Brigade of Gurkhas. It was formed during the Malayan Emergency to support the 17th Gurkha Division.

The history of Queen's Gurkha Signals dates back to 1911 when Gurkha Signallers were employed in the three Indian Corps of Sappers and Miners and it wasn't until the First World War the whole companies of Gurkhas existed within. Eventually in 1928 these corps were phased out of service until the second Gurkha Signals was created to help deal with the Malayan crisis.



The Queen's Gurkha Signals is based at Gamecock Barracks in Bramcote, situated just outside of Nuneaton in Warwickshire. It was in 2009 the UK Government gave retired Gurkhas the right to stay in the UK and many of these have now settled in Nuneaton with their families where there is now a thriving Nepalese community. (Readers may recall that a year or two ago a high profile but successful campaign was led by actress, Joanna Lumley, and a former Regimental Sergeant Major, Om Gurung.)

I recently had the privilege of attending Sandon Park, Nuneaton, as part of the Marshalling and First Aid team for a major sponsored *Run for Nepal* 5 & 10 K run. Funds raised from the effort will be going towards helping rebuild Nepal following the tragic earthquake in 2015. These include ongoing projects such as the rebuilding of schools, homes and community centres for veteran Gurkhas who re-settled in Nepal.

There were between forty and fifty people who took part in either of the two runs, the main aim being to help keep fit. Runners included Gurkhas, men, women and children and medals were given out to those who participated.

It was a wonderful day and atmosphere and I found the Nepalese people so friendly and welcoming. I therefore hope to be able to support the Nepalese community in Nuneaton with their future fundraising.

Val Pollard

SANDWELL SURPRISES



Built into the motorway roundabout at the southern end of West Bromwich town centre is a relic of the former Sandwell Hall, an arched stone gateway, thought to have been built circa 1711. It was once the main entrance to former Sandwell Hall which once lay in the sweeping acres of the Sandwell Valley. It had been said the hall had occupied the site of a medieval priory as, over the years, one or two relics had been excavated.

Sandwell Hall remained the home of the Earls of Dartmouth until 1855, by which time coal and iron industries had become too close for comfort and the family decided to make their home at Patshull. After lying unoccupied for some years, Sandwell Hall was put to various uses before being demolished in 1928. In 1982 an archaeological project was commenced on the site of the hall and it was then that some of the former priory walls were discovered underneath.

Excavations have since revealed the remains of priory buildings of the church belonging to the priory, the remains of a drinking fountain fed by the holy well spring ('Sanswell' which gave its name to the local authority) and an ice house used for storing food and drink. A good starting point to walk to this site is from Sandwell Park Farm, formerly the home farm of Sandwell Hall and still intact, which has since been lovingly restored. The Park Farm is a popular attraction with all classes and in the farmyard it is possible to see the shire horses, pigs, ponies, lambs and other farmyard animals plus rare breeds. There is also a kitchen garden and display section where it is possible to learn about life in the Sandwell Valley over the years, starting from monastic times up to present day. (For those who like refreshment there is also an excellent

teashop included at the site.)

The great swath of pasture land in front of the Park Farm is the setting for many large scale outdoor events, mainly run by the local council.

Nature trails have been developed to take in other discoveries in the Valley, including large lakes, woodlands and open spaces. It is quite amazing how this beautiful landscape is completely surrounded by urbanisation but allowing local residents somewhere they can soon get away from the bustle of traffic. However, there is no escaping the roar of traffic on the M5 motorway which completely bisects the whole valley.

At the bottom end of the Valley on Newton Road stands Bishop Asbury's Cottage, the boyhood home of Francis Asbury, who went on to become founding father of the American Methodist Church, though I doubt if he would have approved of a public house being named after him. Other attractions in the Valley are Swan Pool, Forge Mill Lake, Forge Mill Farm and a RSBP Nature Reserve, each close to where Asbury was first apprenticed to a blacksmith. It is close by the River Tame which winds its way through the Valley.

There is much to see in this very pleasant area of Sandwell where, apart from fascinating sites to visit, there are some interesting trails both for the hardy walker or those who just prefer a quiet stroll. There is ample car parking on site and it's easy to reach from all areas of the Black Country. For somewhere different, why not check it out during coming summer months?

Keith Cheetham

JESUS WENT TO LONDON

Matthew 9 v.36: As He saw the crowds, His heart was filled with pity for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

REMEMBERING THE TRAGIC Grenfell Tower fire, a Methodist, Richard Adams of Thornton Cleveleys was moved to write *Jesus went to London* and read it prior to prayers of intercession in church.

***Jesus went to London; He caught an early train.
He took the tube to Kensington to share the people's pain.***

***He saw the burnt out tower block, derelict and charred,
He saw bereaved and homeless, their lives forever scarred.***

***He shared their bitter ferment and joined the angry sprawl
Demanding news and answers at Kensington Town Hall.***

***Compassion came with open arms from churches, mosques and stores,
Love and food and clothing and ever open doors.***

***Compassion came in boxes to say much more than sorry.
Jesus walked to Notting Hill and helped to load the lorry.***

***He joined police and firefighters, for who could ask for more?
He joined the quest for loved ones from floor to fire-wrecked floor.***

***With courage, skill and dignity the tireless search ascends.
For greater love has no one than to risk one's life for friends.***

***He caught a bus to Westminster –the corridors of power,
And drew their scant attention to the grief of Grenfell Tower.***

***He invited their compassion for the heartbreak and the shock;
As leaders of the nation, to be shepherds of the flock.***

***For all whom fire and death had come rip-roaring through their sleep,
He asked, "Friends, do you love me?" and pleaded, "Feed my sheep".***

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