

THE *Beckoner*

The Magazine
For Beckminster
Methodist Church

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2017

PRICELESS!



ST PETER'S COLLEGIATE CHURCH, WOLVERHAMPTON

*Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult
Of our life's wild restless sea,
Day by day his clear voice soundeth
Saying: 'Christian, follow me'*

Photo by John Holt

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WHAT MATTERS?

I'm writing this in early January when the radio, television, newspapers and magazines are full of hope, fears and predictions for the future. It happens at the beginning of every year and often they are all wide of the mark. Janus always has a face looking backwards and forwards and it's what we do at the beginning of every year and at significant times on other dates. I remember on Spring Bank Holiday in 1982 we were at Bolton Abbey by the River Wharfe. It was a glorious May Day, very hot with sunshine and the beauty of that place, which is one of my very favourite places, was very present. My brother and his family were on holiday from Canada and the whole family had been together. We had a wonderful time. They had left us and, walking by the river, I was ruminating and thinking how good life was and it was also going to be a beautiful summer. How wrong I was. The next weekend my father died suddenly and everything changed.

We know the past and it is safe, locked away in history or in memory. The future is unknown, surrounded by excitement or apprehension, by faith for the future or fear for what we shall have to face. We live with optimism and pessimism. This new year is very strange. In the last year, lots of our certainties have disappeared. In the political world, we have been astounded by changes. The Brexit vote has changed our political landscape and we have a new government. The world has been rocked and shocked by the American presidential election. We see changes, or the possibility of changes in European elections. We are perplexed, disturbed and shocked by the turmoil in the Middle East and the violence, suffering and brutality in Syria and Iraq and the clashes of cultures and violence against people in parts of Africa. A lot of our assurances have gone. The

church faces difficult times. We at Beckminster need to plan for a year without a minister and discover what we are

as a Christian community and how can we best serve our neighbourhood and strengthen and grow as a church?

This means we are apprehensive for the future. We look back to the past with nostalgia because it is sure and certain – but it wasn't always good! We need to learn from it and discover from our experience what helped us then. What really matters? What is of supreme importance? What are our priorities?

Eight years ago the impossible happened in America. Barack Obama was elected president. In a largely racially divided country a black senator became president. He was a charismatic personality, a great orator, full of hope, with a charming talented wife and two daughters. He failed to do many things he had promised, partly because of opposition and the system. But his lasting legacy will be the quality of his character, his ordinariness, genuineness and ability to relate to all. His character has shone through everything. His humanity has glowed. Do you remember him singing *Amazing Grace* at a time of tragedy, of him weeping when talking to victims of gun crime and the failure of government to address the issue – and the joy he gave to an old black woman as he and Michelle danced with her in the White House. Through all the difficulties of his presidency he has maintained his integrity and his grace. His character has shone through everything. That is what matters!

It is what matters in us, individually and corporately. It is what matters in the world. It is what matters in the church. We cannot know the future. There are things we cannot change. There are events globally, nationally, in our own lives over which we have no control. However, in our own lives, by grace, we can live with integrity and compassion. That is how we face the future whatever it is. So, in the words of the hymn:

We'll praise Him for all that is past, and trust Him for all that's to come.

Rev Glennys Bamford



Hymns we have known and loved

EDITORIAL NOTE:

It has been suggested that over the next few editions of this magazine that we might like to run a short series whereby any of our readers are asked to choose a favourite hymn and let us know why they might have some special meaning to them. We are delighted that Glennys, our Supernumerary Minister, has started the ball rolling for us with this her own contribution. If you have a hymn of your own which you'd like to tell us about, please contact us via the Church Office. Many thanks, Editor.

Child of the stable's secret birth



I discovered a new hymn in 1992. I remember the date because then I moved to Luton, where I had a young and dynamic organist. As we were planning the carol service for that year, he said he would like to include "Child of the stable's secret birth" and did I know it?

"Never heard of it," I answered. "It's No.124 in *Hymns and Psalms*" he said. I read it and was captured by it. It is set in the Epiphany section of that hymn book but, very sadly, is not in *Singing the Faith*. It is written by Timothy Dudley Smith, a great modern hymn writer and Anglican bishop and now a very old man. You will find some of his other hymns in *Singing the Faith*, including "Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord".

It is a hymn that is about the Incarnation, what it

means and how in this baby born in Bethlehem is God's plan of redemption for all humankind from creation to the end of time. It expresses the deepest of meanings in beautiful poetry. It concentrates on the baby in the manger but find in that the significance of the cross. It moves me every time I read or sing it – and I use it very often in my prayers. Do read the last two verse as they are particularly powerful:

*Child of the stable's secret birth,
The Lord by right of the lords of earth,
Let angels sing of a King new-born –
The world is weaving a crown of thorn:
A crown of thorn for that infant head
Cradled soft in the manger bed.*

*Eyes that shine in the lantern's ray;
A face so small in its nest of hay –
Face of a child who is born to scan
The world of men through the eyes of man;
And from that face in that final day
Earth and heaven shall flee away.*

*Voice that rang through the courts on high
Contracted now to a wordless cry,
A voice to master the wind and wave,
The human heart and the hungry grave:
The voice of God through the cedar trees
Rolling forth as the sound of seas.*

*Infant hands in a mother's hand
For none but Mary may understand
Whose are the hands and fingers curled
But His who fashioned and made our world;
And through these hands in the hour of death
Nails shall strike to the wood beneath.*

*Child of the stable's secret birth,
The Father's gift to a wayward earth,
To drain the cup of a few short years
Of all our sorrows and all our tears –
Ours` the prize for the road He trod,
Risen with Christ; at peace with God.*

It is both profound and emotionally powerful and needs singing or reading meditatively, but it repays attention!

Rev Glennys Bamford

Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah!

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand:

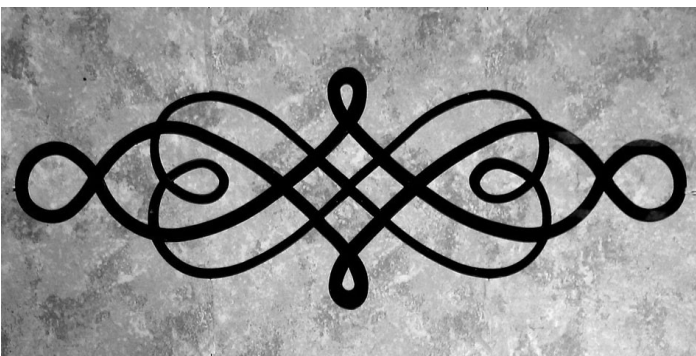


On a fine summer afternoon, I was with my parents on a journey through Mid-Wales. We had stopped near to one of the reservoirs in the Elan Valley. Suddenly, two rather old motor coaches pulled up near to the dam and fifty or so men, all wearing dark blue blazers, stepped off the coaches and walked to the centre of the dam.

This cannot have been their first visit as they quickly assembled and, without hesitation, began to sing *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*. The sound reverberating from the hillsides was stunning. When the hymn was finished they trooped back to the coaches and left. Perhaps this was their rehearsal for a Choir Festival later in the day? Who knows?

The hymn, sung to the tune *Cwm Rhondda* was familiar to me and sung both at Trinity Methodist Church in Willenhall and at school – but not with such passion! Years later, I have heard the guest choirs and some 70,000 voices from the crowd at Cardiff Arms Park stadium sing the hymn for the Welsh Rugby International matches – and that also brought back memories.

Gordon Nicklin



When We Walk with the Lord



(Methodist Hymn book and offices No. 516)

*When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word
What a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still, And with all who will trust
and obey.*

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

John Henry Sammis

This hymn reminds me of my younger days as a young girl going to West Smethwick Methodist Church with my parents and sister.

At Men's Weekend and Church Anniversary the women and children would go into church after a meal had been served in the church hall and, for the evening, a social or concert was organised whilst the men folk cleared the tables away. It was usual for the men and youth club to arrange the evening's entertainment. I was of course of a generation when we either called people 'Mr. and Mrs' or 'Auntie and Uncle'!

One family at church, Ken and Gladys Kear, had two daughters who were both much older than I. The above hymn was Auntie Glad's favourite and she always requested for us to sing it at these 'do's'. By the early 1960s this had also become my own favourite hymn.

I feel that through the 44 years of my being a nurse, this hymn has always sustained me in good faith. I also have a framed copy of this hymn by my bedside.

Val Pollard

The Day Thou Gavest, Lord is Ended

There are many hymns, both ancient and modern, that I could call my favourite. Having been a Sunday School teacher during five consecutive decades at Beck, I know I have to keep up with and maintain the interests of the children. Like them, I love many of the contemporary hymns with their catchy tunes.

However, I am choosing a hymn with old style words, written by John Ellerton in 1870 and sung to the beautiful tune of *St Clement*. It is a hymn of praise, usually associated with the close of day and it has been my favourite since the days of my childhood when I would attend the then Wood Street Baptist Church in Bilston with my Mum and Dad. I would go with elder brother, Doug, to Beckminster in the morning to Junior Church and again to Sunday School in the afternoon prior to going to evening service at eldest brother Ken's church.

This beautiful hymn was used extremely often to close the evening service there, almost like an anthem I thought but disappointed on the odd occasion it wasn't used. Ken and my father used to sing with great gusto and I tried my best to keep up with them. After all, I had a very good treble voice in those days though, sadly, it broke and was never as near as good!

During my days in Questors at Beckminster, The Rev Nigel Collinson (minister at the time) recommended that I should think about local preaching and was, for a while 'On Note'. I recall using the same hymn in the same way to close the evening services but trying not to use it at any one Church on too many occasions. It is a great hymn of praise and the third and fourth verses are very poignant to me in particular:

*As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day.
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.*

*The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.*

In the early days as a keen photographer specialising in landscapes in particular, nothing gave me more pleasure than watching the sun set over land and sea. My wife, Jan, and I have visited the beautiful Calgary Bay on the Isle of Mull for about thirty years and, if there was a glimmer of a sunset appearing, I would rush off to the cliffs or down to the beach to capture it.

On occasions it would be quite spectacular. On others it would just not happen at all but never was it a waste of time. There is always something wonderful about watching the sea at dusk and quite eerie at times also. I would however be standing there in awe each time and thinking of these words, sometimes singing them to myself. I was attempting to comprehend that the beautiful day that God had granted us in this wonderful place was coming to a close.

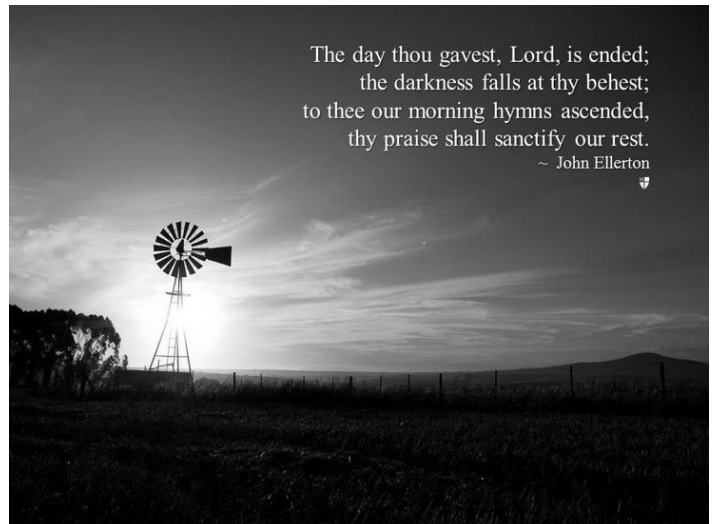
Yet, somewhere out there across the sea were people waking up to the next day of praise. It is a continuous cycle and whoever we are or wherever we are, God is watching over us and caring for us. For me, it is important to realise this and the hymn has become a longstanding anthem of saying 'Thank you' at the end of the day.

*The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended.
The darkness falls at Thy behest,
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.*

Brian Timmis

The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended;
the darkness falls at thy behest;
to thee our morning hymns ascended,
thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

~ John Ellerton



The Good Shepherd Ministry

Around noon each day a small knot of people will be seen to form round an inconspicuous doorway adjoining the car park of Darlington Street church. It is one of the few visible external signs of an extraordinary charitable undertaking in the city. It is of course the soup kitchen and food service run by The Good Shepherd, a Roman Catholic order. Readers will recall the visit of Ann Reaney to Beckminster in December when she accepted the toys and toiletry items donated by church members to the Centre and also gave us an outline of the work carried on there. I recently paid a visit and met Helen Holloway, the administrator, who described the activities which go on day by day and week by week in the basement of the church there.

The scheme was set up in 2003 when three members of the Little Brothers moved to Darlington Street. Initially it operated principally as a soup kitchen until four years ago, when it became apparent that there was a need for a more comprehensive service, the decision was taken to expand the scope of the work.

Now food and hot drinks are served in the dining room between 12.30 and 3.30pm seven days a week to between 200 and 280 people each day, with hot meals on four days and cold food at other times. Food is also distributed to families, with 450 families which are registered and on average between 70 and 80 family bags are distributed four times each week. No charge is made for any of the food.



Basic toiletries are also distributed, and a shower is available on the premises, as are clothes washing and drying facilities. When the centre is unable to offer help in any situation they can usually put applicants in touch with the appropriate agencies. Two of the original three Little Brothers are still actively engaged in the work and offer pastoral care to those in need.

All applicants are registered so that the scheme can assess their needs and keep track of them, establishing, when necessary, why they have ceased using the service. There are currently over 3,100 people on the register with around half being UK nationals and the remainder, often refugees, coming from an amazing 68 other countries. Let the recent report of the ministry describe them.

Behind the statistics are many individual stories of difficulty and struggle – young men in the grip of addiction to alcohol and drugs, Romanian families for whom the streets of England were not paved with gold, people surviving on benefits, men and women suffering from mental illnesses, elderly people looking for company and those just needing support and kindness.

Some need support for only a short time before being able to resume independent living.

Almost all of the food is donated by a variety of sources. One of the main donors is Fareshare, a national charity devoted to helping those in need, but the Centre also receives donations from local large food retailers such as Sainsburys, Morrisons, the Co-op, Costco, and KFC. Local farmers donate fresh vegetables and many churches collect tinned food. Regular contributions are also received from Asian, Muslim and Sikh charities.

Although much of the work is done by over fifty volunteers it still costs around £140,000 to run the scheme, with about a third coming from each of Wolverhampton City Council, grants from other sources and individual donations. In the last few years the work has expanded greatly, both in its scope and the numbers being helped, and is still growing. It was affected by the recent fire in the adjoining premises but when the restoration work is completed the facilities will be greatly improved.

The charity was honoured last year when it was

awarded the Queen's Award for voluntary services. From its beginning as a soup kitchen Helen now says it can be more accurately described as a dining centre. All are helped and no-one is turned away. Gifts of money and/or food and toiletries are still very much wanted in order to carry on this most valuable Christian work in the city centre where everyone in need is treated as a child of God.

Alan Causer

Junior Mission for All

To all my friends at Beckminster who posted their Christmas cards in the JMA post box and made a donation to over the festive season, I am pleased to report that £317.50 was raised through your generosity. A further £30 in Gift Aid was also achieved which will be collected by JMA Head Office.

In addition, I should like to thank those persons who helped me sort the post during the four-week run-up to Christmas. I'd like to take this opportunity of thanking all collectors for their support with JMA throughout 2016. All Gift Aid forms have now been sent off.

Your help has been much appreciated.

Best wishes

Val Pollard,
JMA Secretary



TONG - IN CHEEK!

Many of us older worshippers at Beckminster and maybe some younger ones enjoy looking around old churches and chapels. Most of these buildings are architectural gems, both in outer and interior appearance. It is not only the atmosphere of serenity and Godliness they contain but are also one of England's most visible and tangible links to the past. These places of worship also provide us with a timeline and have been witness to historic events and everyday happenings, births, deaths and marriages and times both happy and sad. Down the centuries they have kept watch over memories and memorials to the great and the modest, noble and possibly a few disreputable.

Many of the best examples of craftsmanship and design are to be found – some in stone, wood, in carvings, sculptures and stained glass and many ornate tombs and monuments recalling the lives of local lords and ladies, squires or landowners and other local folk.

To my mind, one of the finest of parish churches within striking distance of Wolverhampton is St Bartholomew's Church at Tong, Shropshire, situated just off the A41 near Cosford and close to Junction 3 of the M54 motorway. It has been a favourite of mine ever since I first visited the place nearly thirty years ago. This building encapsulates many of the features mentioned above and also has gained international fame through the writings of Charles Dickens in his novel, *The Old Curiosity Shop*. But more of that later!

Tong itself is a small village of handsome red brick mansions and picturesque black-and-white cottages. The church dates mainly from 1410 and sits grandly on a hillock on the edge of the settlement. It is festooned with pinnacles and battlements and sports a central tower from square to octagonal to a short spire. However, the ornate exterior hardly prepares one for the wonders within the church. On my first visit my eyes were immediately drawn to the plethora of ornate Vernon family monuments and tombs along with those of other associated families. Not without reason has this church been known

as the 'Westminster Abbey of the Midlands'.

My mind immediately went back to earlier years when I would often visit Haddon Hall, near Bakewell in Derbyshire, which, I recalled, was once the home and seat of the Vernon family. The Duke of Rutland now holds Haddon (but actually lives at Belvoir Castle in Lincolnshire) as a descendant of John Manners, a man who famously eloped with Dorothy Vernon, heiress of Sir George Vernon of Haddon Hall. (This legend was also turned into an opera, *Haddon Hall*, with music by Sir Arthur Sullivan and first presented at the Savoy Theatre in London on 24 September 1892!) By this marriage the Vernons came into the lordship of Tong and chose St Bartholomew's to be their place of burial.

The oldest tomb in Tong church sits beneath the north crossing and belongs to Sir Fulke Pembrugge (1363-1409), Lord of Tong. He lies beside his wife, Lady Isabel, who founded a chantry and college at Tong for her own and her husbands' souls in 1409 (she was also a lady at the court of Richard II and died in 1446). Across from them, under the south crossing arch, is the superb tomb of Lady Isabel's son-in-law, Sir Richard Vernon (1391-1451), who was Speaker of the House of Commons in 1432-33.

His tomb is considered to be one of England's finest alabaster effigies. Other members of the family commemorated there include Anne Talbot (died 1494) and Henry Vernon (died 1515). The Talbot family were also Earls of Shrewsbury but this Henry Vernon was put in charge of Catherine of Aragon and Arthur, Prince of Wales by King Henry VII and was with them both when Prince Arthur, his heir and eldest son, died at Ludlow Castle in 1502. After this event Catherine was then married to his second son, Henry, who was later to become notorious as the six-times married Henry VIII. History and religion might well have proved very different if the boy Arthur had lived! There are also other various tombs in the church commemorating later members of the Vernon and other noble families.

The early history of Tong was dominated by its Castle and the Lords of the Manor who owned the land. Until the building of the M54 motorway, fragments of the ruins of nearby Tong Castle could also be seen. It was the Pembrugge family who made Tong Castle more of a home than a fortified castle and also had a major impact on the village by building St Bartholomew's Church and founding Tong College. Excavations of the Castle over the past thirty years have revealed a complex sequence of building and rebuilding. By the mid-19th century the industrial revolution brought further changes to Tong. The estate had run out of finance under the Durant family and was consequently sold to the Earl of Bradford in 1854. This extended the Bradford estates that surrounded to north of the parish (i.e. Weston Park) and the Castle was then rented out to John Hartley, mayor of Wolverhampton and owner of collieries, ironworks and glassworks. However, funding for repair and refurbishment eventually ran out and the building began years of decline. It became a dangerous ruin and in 1954 was demolished.

So back to Charles Dickens. It was thought he visited Tong church when his grandmother worked at Tong Castle as housekeeper, which stood south of St Bartholomew's church. He would therefore be quite familiar with the village and its various buildings. In his book *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Little Nell dies in a village in the Midlands, recognisable as Tong, and is buried in the churchyard, with her grandfather grieving at her graveside.

The novel was hugely popular, especially in

America, and visitors came in their droves to see the locations suggested therein. Tourists arrived in Tong to view the 'supposed' grave, which of course was completely fictional. However, an enterprising verger and village postmaster, George H. Bowden (1856-1943), apparently asked local people to pay for a headstone and also forged a bogus entry in the church register of burials (he gave himself away by using post office ink to do this!). He then charged visitors to see the 'grave' of Little Nell.

The headstone has since disappeared and moved from time to time to make way for genuine graves. The 'supposed' grave is well marked and quite near to the West Door of the church, close to a flagpole. It is dishonest, after all, but some would perhaps best describe the gesture as being "tongue in cheek"! There's no accounting for taste and maybe it satisfies some people's curiosity! I can however recommend a visit to Tong to see this wonderful church and maybe you could have a look around for any other clues which you might discover.

Note

For other Dickens 'devotees' they can also see another 'bogus grave' a few miles away at St. Chad's Churchyard in Shrewsbury. There is a very plain but flat gravestone engraved with the name *Ebenezer Scrooge*. This was put there and left afterwards whilst the filming of *A Christmas Carol*, starring George C. Scott, took place. That also attracts quite a few visitors. Other scenes were also shot in and around the town!

Keith Cheetham



Stewards' Musings

As a Stewards' Musing for this edition it was thought appropriate to try and explain the mysteries (or some of them) of the Methodist Stationing Process, especially as at present it appears Beckminster will be without a minister from next September.

When a Methodist Circuit (Beckminster is one of 22 churches in the Wolverhampton circuit) has a minister leaving, it has first to decide that it has a need and capacity to replace that minister. Such a decision is made at a Circuit Meeting, where each of the 22 churches has representatives who attend. If agreement is given, then the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) which is made up of the ministerial staff and circuit stewards decide which churches the appointment will cover. Once this has been agreed, much of the remaining work in the Stationing Process is carried out by the circuit invitation committee (IC). Our own circuit's committee at present includes two ministers, two circuit stewards and a co-opted ex-circuit steward. 'Stationing' is the term used by the Methodist Church whereby ministers are matched, invited to visit and possibly appointed to vacant positions in circuits, explained in more detail below.

With Rev Linda Bishop leaving us next August, our circuit confirmed a proposal by the CLT that a position be offered for a minister for Beckminster and Fordhouses churches. Linda is for this connexional year also the minister in charge of Fordhouses. Our IC drew up a profile for this appointment, which is restricted to just two A4 pages, and includes sections: The Circuit (description of, and stated policy about mission and ministry), the Appointment (description of the vacancy to be filled and the strengths and weaknesses of the appointment), the Presbyter (skills, strengths and experience of the minister being sought and the missional and pastoral emphasis required), and details of the Manse. To assist with the completion of sections 2 and 3, discussions occurred with the senior stewards/leadership teams of the churches involved.

At the same time, presbyters seeking new appointments also complete a profile (again two pages in length) with sections covering their past ministerial experiences, their skills, gifts and strengths, personal interests and lay employment experiences and any location issues they might have. Both sets of profiles needed to be completed and sent to the District Chair (Rev Rachel Parkinson) by 25 September (Wolverhampton circuit is one of twelve circuits which make up the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Methodist District). On confirming these profiles, the District Chair forwards them to the Methodist Connexion Stationing Administration for collation.

The circuit profiles were released last mid-October and made available to presbyters involved in stationing, while the presbyter profiles were sent to the circuit invitation committees. It is worth noting here that this connexional year there were over 150 circuit profiles of appointments hoping to be filled, and only 102 presbyter profiles. Our own District was looking for six appointments with the Wolverhampton circuit looking for two of these. By the end of October our circuit had to consider the 102 profiles, decide on the most suitable for each of the two circuit appointments, meet with the District Chair and her Lay Stationing representative and confirm a priority list of five presbyter names (plus a reserve) for each vacancy, for her to take to the Connexional Stationing Matching – Round 1 at the beginning of November. Presbyters also had to decide on a priority list of five circuit vacancies which best fitted their profile, which also were taken by Rachel.

During three days of prayerful contemplation, discussion and much compromise, matches were attempted to be made for the presbyters and the circuit vacancies, as far as possible based on preferences given. At the end of Round 1 Rachel was successful in making three matches for her six vacancies. Wolverhampton circuit had a match for our other vacancy (Codsall, Coven and Brewood), but unfortunately not one for the Beckminster and

Fordhouses position. When a match is made, a visit by the presbyter to the circuit and the churches involved has to occur within ten days. Following the visit circuit IC's, after due consultation with the CLT members and church representatives involved in the visit, decide whether they agree to the match. The presbyter has 48 hours to also make a decision. Pleasingly the Codsall, Coven and Brewood match was successful, as was the match made for Linda and the other circuit minister involved in Round 1, Rev Ian Heath.

For those presbyters and circuits not successful in Round 1, there was a Stationing - Round 2 - at the end of November. This year there were 32 presbyters who either hadn't received a match during Round 1, or whose match had not been successful, while there were still over eighty appointments to be filled (including Beckminster and Fordhouses). Our circuit IC repeated the process of reviewing the remaining 32 profiles, identifying possible suitable choices, meeting with Rachel and again agreeing a list of five names for her to take to the Stationing Matching - Round 2. Unsurprisingly, considering the numbers involved, no match for us ensued. There is a Stationing - Round 3 - for the eight or nine presbyters still without an appointment, but optimism is not great on a suitable match for us occurring!

Already our CLT have met to discuss possible ways forward from September 2017 for Beckminster, Fordhouses and also Fallings Park. The latter are also without a minister following the Rev Ruth Reynolds-Tyson recently curtailing her appointment twelve months early from August 2017. While each of these churches will need to have a named ordained presbyter allocated to them from September, it may for example be a recently retired minister, but it is unlikely that all three will have a minister offering the same amount of support as they are at present receiving. This is where churches, particularly Beckminster, need to consider what their priorities are for the next twelve months and whether there are people within their congregations who are able and willing to help support some of the work and involvements their church is presently actively participating in. More of this will be explained in future editions of *The Beckoner*.

Pete Prescott
(Beckminster Leadership Team,

Christian Humour

A man had just had a severe heart operation in a private hospital. When he came round he found a nun holding his hand. She said "I hate asking at a time like this but do you have medical insurance?" He had to admit that he didn't. "Well, do you have enough cash to pay the bill?" "No, I'm sorry", he replied. "Then do you have any relatives who might be able to help?" "Only a sister, a spinster who is also a nun" "Oh", said the nun, "She is no spinster, she is married to God!" "In that case send the bill to my Brother-in-law" he replied.

The vicar was walking round his parish and stopped to admire a beautiful garden, "You and the Lord have created a wonderful garden" he said admiringly to the man tending it.

"Yes, but you should have seen it when the Lord had it on his own" the owner replied.

A dispute arose regarding the boundary between Heaven and hell and it was agreed that the matter would be settled by law. After a hundred years when nothing had happened the devil enquired of St Peter when they could begin the proceedings, "I don't know" was Peter's reply. "We're still trying to find a lawyer"



A catering company has come up with a solution for those dinner hosts who buy the food in already prepared but would like their guests to believe that they cooked the sumptuous meal. For an extra £5 they will supply a plausible array of dirty pans and dishes to convince the guests that the host has been slaving over a hot stove to prepare it. If you also wash up the dishes the company will give you a rebate of £2.50.

Alan Causer

BECKMINSTERAMA

Open Way

Alternate Tuesdays at 8pm



Dates and venues to be advised in Church Notices.

Contact Hilda Evans Tel: 421777

Feb 14 83 Coalway Road 7.30 pm

See Church notices for further meetings during February and March

Monday Focus

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

Feb 14 Valentine Party

27 Lundy Island

Colin McShane

Mar 13 Travelling Tales

Mike Boxall

27 Autism—Celebrating Difference

Christine Pearson

Contacts: Ann Holt Tel: 650812

Margaret Nicklin Tel: 742537

Emmaus Group

Meet Thursdays at 7.45 pm. All welcome

Contact: Janet Anderson Tel: 337404

See church notices for Feb/Mar meetings

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.

BECKMINSTERAMA

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, the five departments of 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)



Special Events

Friday 3 March

Women's World Day of Prayer at St Philip's Parish Church,
Bradmore

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.

Contact: Sheila White Tel: 332134

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PASTORAL WORKER FOR THE ELDERLY

Tess Davies

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Women's World Day of Prayer

This annual international event is to take place on Friday 3 March 2017. It is a worldwide movement of Christian women who come together to observe a common day of prayer and is always held on the first Friday in March each year. The organisation, in many countries, has a continuing relationship in prayer and service and, through it, women are encouraged to become aware of their talents and use them in the service of the wider community.

The Day of Prayer begins as dawn breaks over the islands of Tonga in the Pacific and continues across each continent until the last Services of this special day are held back in the Pacific, on the islands of Samoa, circling the world in prayer in about 36 hours. Christians from over 170 countries and islands will be joining together in praise, worship and prayer and will include Christian women from Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches throughout the world.

This year's local event is to take place at St Philip's parish church, Church Road, Bradmore, Wolverhampton WV3 7EN on Friday 3 March (at a time to be advised a little nearer the time in our weekly Church notices). Ladies from various denominations will be joining together in their prayers on this special Day.

It was last September that a new round of 'preparation days' was started to plan for the 2017 event when it was decided to introduce the Service to local leaders. The Chairperson for the National Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland is Elizabeth Burroughs, who stated, "Last Autumn the Philippines were prominent in the news and so it was decided that this year's programme should be written by the Christian women of the Philippines. It is at international meetings that the subject and 'writing' countries for the next few years are generally agreed. (International meetings only happen every four to five years)", she added.

The service written, by the women of the Philippines is based on the theme of justice, a

highly relevant subject in today's world. Although climate change does get a mention, the main theme will be the exploitation of women – a worldwide problem! Scarcely a country exists in the world where some form of female exploitation does not occur.

Last year, the international organisation allocated grants to forty Christian charities, large and small, operating both at home and abroad. Projects being helped are:- the funding of disabled children in Zimbabwe; providing of maternity care in Burkino Faso; the distribution of Bibles to children in Cuba; the repair of obstetric fistula in Nigeria; and offering support to women in danger of exploitation in some of our larger cities.

Ladies from Beckminster Methodist Church will be taking part in the service at St. Philip's on 3 March and invite any ladies interested are very welcome to join them.

(Information submitted by Lindy Beere)



More Grave Words from the Churchyard

Here lyeth the body of Sarah Bloomfield
aged 74
Cut off in blooming yuthe we can but pity

St Nicholas' churchyard Great Yarmouth. They must possess very good genes in East Anglia.

**IN A VAULT UNDERNEATH
Lie Interred
Several of the Saunderses
Late of this parish**

Tetbury Gloucestershire. Too mean or guilty of paranoia?

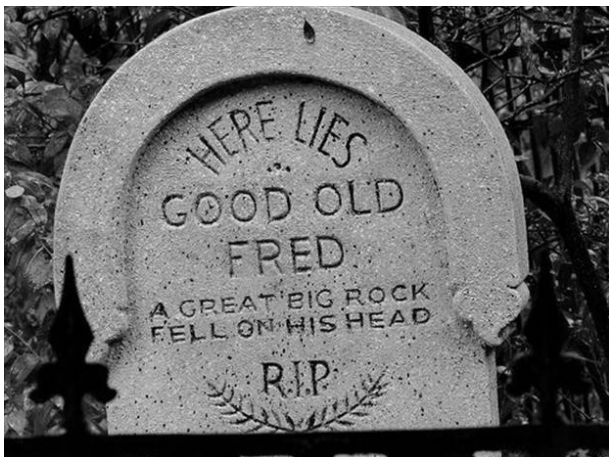
**HERE LIES
JANE SHORE
SAY NO MORE
WHO WAS ALIVE IN SIXTY FIVE**

Here Lieth
JOHN JAMES COOK
of Newby
Who was a faithful servant to his master
And an upright, downright honest man
1760

Ripon. Can't be fairer than that.

ANN COLLINS
died 11th Sept 1804 aged 49
Twas as she tript from cask to cask
In a bung-hole she quickly fell
Suffocation was her task
She had no time to say farewell

King's Stanley. Even an alcoholic surely wouldn't choose this method of departure.



JOE RICHARD RILEY
Lieth Here

Who lately was our ministere
To the poor he ever was a friend
And gave them all at his last end
This towne must twenty shillings pay
To them for him each Good Friday
God grant all pastors his good mind
That they may leave good deeds behind
He died XXIst of October 1617

Derby.

Valentine Snow
Thaw every breast
Melt ev'ry eye with woe
Here's dissolution
By the hand of Death!
To dirt, to water turned
The fairest Snow
O the King's Trumpeter
Has lost his breath

All Hallows, Bread Street, London. Valentine Snow was indeed the king's trumpeter but he was, perhaps more importantly, Handel's chief trumpeter for whom he wrote the trumpet obbligato in "The Trumpet shall Sound" in Messiah.

Sacred
to the memory of
Major James Brush
who was killed by the accidental
discharge of a pistol by his orderly

well done
good and faithful servant

Woolwich. It's hard to escape the conclusion that the stonemason didn't realise it could be read in two ways.

Alan Causer

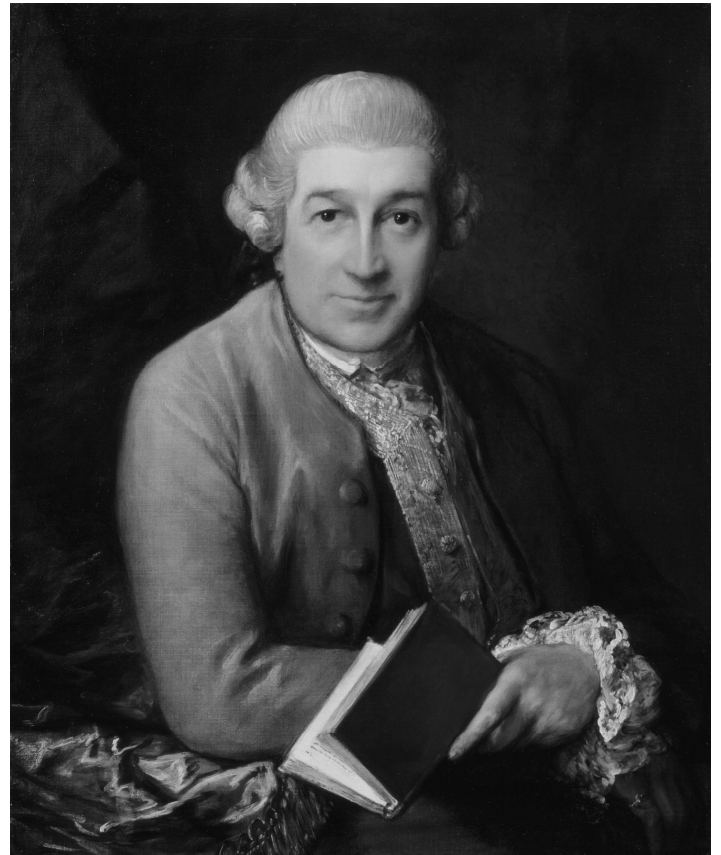
DAVID GARRICK - DOYEN OF THE STAGE

David Garrick was an English actor, playwright, theatre manager and producer who influenced nearly all aspects of theatrical practice throughout the 18th century, and was a pupil and friend of Dr. Samuel Johnson. They had something in common in that they both hailed from Lichfield, though Garrick had been born at the Angel Inn, Widemarsh Street in Hereford on 19 February 1717 into a family of Huguenot roots. It was some time after his birth that the family moved to Lichfield. February 2017 therefore marks the tercentenary of his birth and various celebrations are being organised during the coming year to commemorate his life, both in Lichfield and elsewhere.

Lichfield Garrick, a theatre named after him, has launched a year-long celebration of one of its most famous sons by staging a series of events across the city. The celebrations were launched recently with the unveiling of a bronze mask of Garrick's face, designed by Lichfield artist Peter Walker. The mask is the first stage of a project which will see the theatre incorporate a large-scale statue of the legendary actor on the outside wall.

The Garrick family lived in Beacon Street, Lichfield, where the Probate Court was built. David became Dr. Johnson's first pupil and they eventually left together to seek their respective fortunes in London. (The morning of their departure for London will be re-enacted by the Intimate Theatre group at Dr. Johnson's House, Lichfield, on Friday 3 March 2017, in a both witty and touching play.)

At the age of nineteen, Garrick, who had been educated at Lichfield Grammar School, enrolled in Dr. Johnson's Edial Hall School. Undoubtedly he showed an enthusiasm for drama and the theatre world very early on and appeared in a school production of George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*. After Dr. Johnson's school was closed, he and Garrick, now friends, left for London. Upon his arrival in 1737, Garrick and his brother George, six years his junior, became



partners in a wine business with operations both in London and Lichfield with David looking after the London operation. Unfortunately it did not flourish, possibly due to David's distraction by his theatrical interests.

In 1740, David Garrick saw his first play, a satire *Aesop in the Shade*, which was produced at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Within a year he was appearing professionally himself in small parts at the Goodman's Fields Theatre. He made his debut as a professional actor in a summer tour to Ipswich, appearing under the stage name of *Lyddal* to avoid consternation to his family. On 19 October 1741, Garrick appeared in the title role of *Richard III* after having been coached by an actor and playwright, Charles Macklin, and soon became the talk of London for his performances at the Goodman's Fields Theatre. He began to move on to other roles, all within the first six months of his acting career.

He was then engaged to play at Drury Lane in

Otway's *The Orphan* and went on to play the title roles in *King Lear* and also in his popular *Richard III*. This led to him to being engaged for the full 1742-43 season.

At the end of the London season, Garrick travelled to Dublin for a summer season at the Theatre Royal, Smock Alley, where he added two new roles to his repertoire – Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Ben Jonson's Abel Druggier in *The Alchemist*. On a second visit to Dublin he managed and directed the company in conjunction with Thomas Sheridan (father of playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan). On his return to London, he spent some time acting at Covent Garden. Later, at the end of 1747, he took over the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane with James Lacy, which led to many successes and accolades. Garrick set himself the task of upgrading the real quality of the English theatre, especially in the performance of Shakespeare's plays!

After a few unfortunate love affairs, David Garrick finally met and married Eva Marie Veigel, a German dancer in opera choruses who emigrated to London in 1746. The pair wed on 22 June 1749 and are preserved together in several portraits, including one by painter, William Hogarth. The union was childless but happy and they were to enjoy thirty years of married bliss. In 1754, David's increasing wealth enabled him to purchase a palatial estate for them both to live in, naming it *Garrick's Villa*. He also indulged his passion for Shakespeare by building a *Temple to Shakespeare* on the north bank of the River Thames, opposite Hampton Court Palace.

In September 1769 Garrick was set to stage and organised a *Shakespeare Jubilee Festival* in Stratford-upon-Avon. This was to become a major focal point in the emerging movement that helped cement Shakespeare as England's national poet. Sadly no Shakespeare plays were performed during the Jubilee as heavy rain had forced the Pageant to be called off.

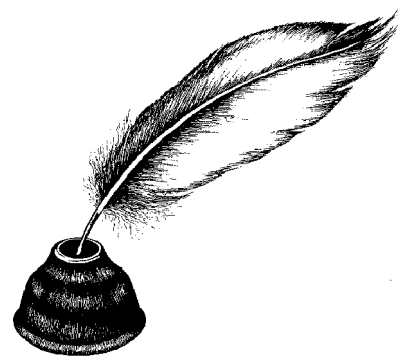
Garrick managed the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, until his retirement in 1776 and even in his last years continued to add roles to his acting repertoire, Posthumus in *Cymbeline* being one of his last. Shortly before his death he worked on a production of *The Camp* with Sheridan at Drury Lane but caught a very bad

cold. He died on 20 January 1779 at his house in Adelphi Buildings, London, and was greatly mourned. He was interred in Poets' Corner at a lavish funeral held in Westminster Abbey along with other notable greats from the arts and theatre world who later joined him (Sir Henry Irving and Sir Lawrence Olivier) David Garrick was the first actor ever to be given such an accolade.

Undoubtedly it was Garrick's acting which brought him the most adulation. He introduced a new style of acting to the stage in a more relaxed naturalistic manner. His expressive gestures and theatrical movements to convey comedy, pathos or sheer dramatic impact, was loved by all his audiences. His name still lives on, not only in Lichfield (with its Garrick Theatre and monument in Lichfield Cathedral) but also remembered in London with the Garrick Theatre in St. Martin's Lane also being named after him. This is overlooked across the street by a fine statue of the great actor outside the Garrick Club.

Theatre lovers and other visitors can look forward to some interesting events over the next few months!

Keith Cheetham



Don't forget!
copy deadline for
April—May Issue
Mar 5th 2017

LONGING FOR PEACE

*Oh little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie.*

For many years that was one of my favourite Christmas carols as it reflected the peace and the tranquillity of the scene of Jesus' birth.

It has collided with reality as far as I am concerned. On reflection, as I thought more carefully about the Christmas story and the harshness of the Roman occupation, I doubt it was very peaceful at all. Certainly the Bethlehem that I know today is not best described as a "little town" and it's hard to think of anything less descriptive of Bethlehem than the phrase "how still we see thee lie".

The driving on busy roads is sheer anarchy – no development of the roads has taken place since the beginning of the occupation in 1967 and they are now simply unable to cope with the traffic. Many nights when I lie in bed I hear tear-gas fired and often the sound of rounds of live ammunition. The separation barrier surrounds three sides of the town, devastating the tourist industry and cutting many local people off from their land. One novel wooden product does sell well – a nativity scene with the Magi unable to reach the baby Jesus in the manger as they are

on the wrong side of the Wall. That is the town I have come to know during the last few months and increasingly developed an affection for. A new sign has been erected on Manger Street, it says "I love Bethlehem" and suddenly it's been the top spot for selfies and group photographs – even competing with Manger Square!

In reality there are many common factors between the Bethlehem of today and the town of Jesus' time. Bethlehem is marginalised. If you have the BBC weather app, try finding the weather for Bethlehem! You'll find you can get the weather for Bethlehem South Africa or Bethlehem in the United States, but Bethlehem Palestine doesn't seem to exist! I have no idea why, but perhaps it's appropriate for the town where Jesus was born. It was a town of little significance in those days.

Then a short time ago it seemed that things were starting to change. I first noticed that a shop selling tourist souvenirs had been changed into one stocked high with tinsel, inflatable Santas and artificial Christmas trees (I have yet to see any real Christmas trees here!) Then I noticed the beginnings of a structure being built in the town centre in the suburb of Bethlehem I live in – Bet Jala – soon Bet Sa-



hour had one, too, and thirdly, work began in Manger Square. It's the building of a Christmas tree that would be seen across the world when, for one night, the TV cameras would be here again. Bethlehem is changing – it is getting ready to be in the spotlight probably just for one night. The birthplace of Jesus is being prepared once more for the Christmas festival.

A short while ago I was in Manger Square and heard a band playing. It was marching music and I couldn't decide where it was coming from, then as I walked back to the car, I realised it was coming from the Girls High School playground. The Scouts' marching band was practising for the major part they would be playing in the coming events.

The next change came when I was driving down the main road through Bet Sa-hour. Suddenly I saw a bright star overhead. The star had been there for months, but now it shone with a brightness brighter than any other star. It had been turned on and the stark electric light illumined the road.

I often reflect that the land Jesus was born into two thousand years ago was remarkably similar to the Bethlehem of today – even if the town is so very different to what it once was. It was occupied then, the soldiers patrolled and the ordinary people like Mary and Joseph had to go where they were told to go – or were not able to go where they were told they could not go.

Many Palestinians are unable to visit relatives just a few miles away at Christmas unless they are able to get a pass to enter into Israel. The Holy Family fled as refugees – there are three refugee camps in Bethlehem alone.

Just down the road from where I live is a well that tradition has it was the first watering point for the Holy Family as they fled to Egypt. I have my doubts about it – it doesn't seem very far on their journey – but like the family needing refreshment, Bethlehem today feels in need of a boost, to be lifted again from its daily troubles.

The preparations were well on their way for the City of David to again celebrate the coming of the Prince of Peace. Once again, the fields where the shepherds were minding their flocks would be swelling to the sound of Christmas carols. "Peace on earth and goodwill to all" sang the angels in those fields. It is a sentiment so needed today in Bethlehem. Yet, the town of Jesus' birth is longing for peace once more. Please remember Bethlehem in your prayers.

Rev. John Howard

John is a Mission Partner in Israel and Palestine at this time! This article has been reproduced by kind permission of The Methodist Recorder which first published it just prior to Christmas 2016.



Rev Eleanor - Superwoman!

The Rev Eleanor Reddington was a member of Beckminster Methodist Church, from where she candidated for the Methodist ministry. She returned to take our Morning Service last year on Sunday 21st August during our 90th Anniversary year. She is a remarkable lady and we felt her story was worth the re-telling!

Back in May 1977, life changed forever for Eleanor Reddington. She was sitting in her car waiting to pull out at a roundabout when a car hit her from behind. The accident caused whiplash, which meant she had to wear a neck brace on and off, and she suffered bouts of prolonged pain. Doctors told her there was nothing they could do to repair the injury, so Eleanor simply soldiered on 'with painkillers and prayer' until June 1981, when exactly the same thing happened to her again!

"I was sitting at a different roundabout when once again I was shunted from behind" said the 63-year-old Methodist minister from Swaffham in Norfolk. *(This happened in Chapel Ash, Wolverhampton!)* "But this time the damage was more severe." Eleanor's spinal cord and neck were damaged, and she found she had to wear the neck brace permanently. She also needed elbow crutches or a mobility scooter to move around.

"It was devastating", she said. "I couldn't believe that this had happened to me again. But there wasn't anything that could be done – I just had to get on with things. You have to accept that accidents happen. No matter how careful you are, you can't account for what other people do, and you can't spend your life being angry about it. That gets you nowhere!"

At first, Eleanor didn't do any exercise. By 1980 she had become a Methodist minister so was kept busy tending her flock. She had enjoyed surfing when she was a teenager in Cornwall, and started to feel that something was missing from her life. Then, while on holiday in the Isle of Wight in 2002, she realised that something was missing.

"There was a swimming pool in the garden of



the house that we were staying in and it looked just too good to miss" she explained. So, with some help from husband, Malcolm, Eleanor went for a dip. "From the moment I got in, I felt revived – alive again – and able to move about freely. It was so liberating!" Eleanor swam every day of her stay. When she got back home, she went to the local pool and discovered they had a hoist. "I didn't realise that a lot of pools have hoists, so there would be no problem getting in or out of the pool. I was hooked."

She started swimming three or four times a week, and found that it really helped with her upper-body strength. "I don't kick much because of my spinal injury so all the power comes from my arms" she said. It was at her local pool a year later that Eleanor saw a poster advertising a charity swim. In the Aspire Channel Swim challenge participants swim the distance of the width of the Channel (22 miles) spread over a twelve week period.

"I was swimming about a mile per session, three or four times a week, so it took me a few weeks to complete the challenge. I felt a great sense of achievement – so much so that I've done it every year since!"

That was 2003, and since then Eleanor has done twelve 'Channel' swims and has raised £17,000 for the charity. "Aspire is a spinal injuries charity, and having my own spinal injury made it all the more poignant" she added. (For further information, check website www.aspirechannelswim.co.uk)

In 2009, Eleanor was able to experience the real thing. As part of an Aspire relay team swimming across the actual Channel, Eleanor swam a one-hour leg. "It was amazing – but cold!" She has since developed a taste for swimming outdoors. "Nothing beats a duck's eye view of our wonderful countryside", she said. She has also swum a mile in Cumbria's Lake Windermere (the largest natural lake in England), 10 kilometres along the River Dart in Devon and the 2.5 miles across the Solent from the UK mainland to the Isle of Wight. "You do have to keep your wits about you, with big boats

bearing down on you" she said.

"I wear a wetsuit for outdoor swimming, but it's still pretty chilly. I also have my swimming crutches – a trusty but rusty old pair that I can take into the water to launch myself off. My long-suffering husband usually wades out alongside me to take them from me and give them back when I need to get out of the water. Swimming has been a great way to strengthen my muscles, and I'm sure that it's kept me mobile for longer."

Today, Eleanor pastors Swaffham and five other Methodist churches in the Norfolk area. She is currently gearing up for her 13th Channel challenge. "I'm so proud that my injuries don't stop me from helping other people. And my motto is "If you're going to do something, you might as well do it properly." Amen to that!

Adapted from a interview given last year to 'Woman's Weekly' and submitted by Loraine Harris)



A 'WORKERS' STATELY HOME!

A few years ago when I was still working for Sheffield Council as its Conference & Tourist Officer, I had a telephone call one morning from the then Leader of the City Council – one David Blunkett (now Lord Blunkett and former Education minister and Home Secretary). David and I go back to his time as a teenager when I first met him as a Methodist local preacher who had come to preach at our local church!

“Keith” he said, “I’ve got a lady with me who has just been appointed as the Administrator for Wortley Hall, which belongs to the Labour Party, and I wonder if you could give her some advice as to how to market the place as a successful conference centre?” As I’d just finished a report I answered “Yes, I’m free at present, would you like to send her down?” Five minutes later the lady appeared in front of me. I soon detected she was a very ‘switched on’ person and, after formalities, we settled down to chat. She produced a notebook and, whilst I related how I went about my work, she scribbled down lots of notes, only interrupting me by the odd question.

We chatted for over an hour. She went on to tell me Wortley Hall was owned by the trade unions and had been in their possession since 1951. Apparently the year previously, a group of local trade union activists had identified the hall as a possible educational and holiday centre, and established a co-operative which succeeded in purchasing the hall for those purposes.

A few years later, there was to be a sequel to this lady’s visit to see me!

I was of course aware of Wortley Hall and was a stately home on the northern side of Sheffield, situated just off the M1 motorway between Sheffield and Barnsley.

It is a palatial building in the grand style, constructed of sandstone ashlar with graduated slate roofs, mostly in two storeys with a 7-bay south front overlooking pleasant gardens. It had quite a history and an original hall was rebuilt by Sir Francis Wortley in 1586. During the English



Civil War his son, Sir Francis Wortley, 1st Baronet, was a Royalist who fought for the King. He allowed the hall to be used as a garrison for 150 dragoons but he was captured in 1644 and imprisoned in the Tower of London. On his release in 1649 he was obliged to pay a heavy fine to recover his property. Wortley eventually descended to an illegitimate daughter who married the second son of the Earl of Sandwich.

The Hall was significantly remodelled in 1742-46 and the East Wing added in 1757-61 for Sir Edward Wortley Montagu, MP and Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, who died in 1761. He left the hall to his daughter Mary, who had married Prime Minister John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute. From her it passed in 1794 to their son, Colonel James Archibald Stuart, who added the surname Wortley to his own. He left it to his son Colonel James Archibald (1776-1845) who was MP for Yorkshire from 1818 to 1826, when he was created Baron Wharnccliffe (the Wharnccliffe Craggs are a beauty spot close to the estate and overlooking the River Don – recently featured in one of Michael Portillo’s BBC series on railway journeys).

Edward Montagu-Stuart-Wortley-Mackenzie, 3rd Baron Wharnccliffe was created Earl of Wharnccliffe in 1876. The Hall was the seat of the Earls of Wharnccliffe until the Second World War when it was commissioned by the British Army, after which its structural condition really deteriorated. Sadly, the family were unable to

afford the refurbishment and upkeep of the hall and so it remained empty whilst members of the family moved into smaller properties in and around the nearby village of Wortley.

In 1949, an article appeared in the local press that the 3rd Earl of Wharnccliffe was considering offering a short term lease on his ancestral home as he had been unable to sell the property due to an entailment in his father's will. When he died in 1953, his son, Alan James Montagu-Stuart-Wortley-Mackenzie became the 4th Earl of Wharnccliffe at the age of 18.

I well remember he had quite a reputation for the high life and was always getting into fights, scrapes and acting drunk and disorderly. He was always considered as "quite a wild one!" These incidents were often reported in the local media in Sheffield and South Yorkshire. He was also somewhat of a musician and, for a short time, was offered a tour by Moss Empires Ltd. playing the drums and other instruments and billed as *The Rock 'n' Roll Earl* as he travelled around the various provincial theatres owned by that group. He had two children but died in 1987 at the age of 52.

In 1949, Albert Vincent Williams, known as Vin, spotted an article in the local press about the deterioration at the hall and of the offer of a short-term lease. Williams was a lecturer with the National Council of Labour Colleges and thought it a perfect opportunity to open an education and recreation centre for members of trade unions, the Labour Party and those in the co-operative movement. He had already got to know senior union members in his district through his work.

He then approached the local committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) and gained their support. Two of them then went on an expedition to have a look at the property. They found it in rather a sorry state. However, as the estate was only asking for £50 in rent for the first year, followed by £500 per annum for 14 years, they saw it as a bargain, especially as they would also be given the first say on a new seven-year lease when the original expired! At a pivotal meeting in 1950, Williams outlined his vision for Wortley Hall and a key principle about ownership was laid down.

Wortley Hall was to be a co-operative belonging to its members, with equal voting rights regardless of how many shares an individual or organisation held. Members also had to either belong to a union affiliated to the TUC or be a member of the Labour Party or a co-operative society, guild or party. And so Wortley Hall was formally opened on 5 May 1951 after refurbishment, mainly brought about by an army of local willing volunteers.

By the end of the seven-year lease, the management committee approached the 4th Earl of Wharnccliffe and struck a deal to buy the hall for £10,000 and on 26 October 1959, Wortley Hall officially became the "Workers Stately Home".

Some of the original names of principal rooms in the aristocratic pile have since been changed for obvious reasons. The family's sitting room is now the AEU Lounge, the spectacular dining room is now the Foundry Dining Room (named after the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers). Lady Wharnccliffe's former sitting room is now the Board Room. Almost everywhere within the house, the contrast between landed gentry and socialist principles are in evidence.

It is now some years since I had occasion to visit Wortley Hall myself. It was really a follow-up to my earlier meeting with it's new lady Administrator – but who was she? It happened that about four years after our meeting I was watching the BBC Television programme *Question Time* chaired by David Dimbleby. As I glanced at the panel that evening there were four gentlemen and one lady. When I looked a little closer I thought the lady looked rather familiar to me.

At the end of the programme I pulled out my diary from four years earlier to see whether it was the same lady that I'd once met back in my office. On searching, I found it was the very same person. Her name was MO MOWLAM! (Later to become Northern Ireland minister in the Labour government and, sadly, who later died of cancer.)

Keith Cheetham



Fairtrade Fortnight

'Put fairtrade in your Break'

Monday 27 February - Sunday 12 March 2017

It's that time of year again when we can show our solidarity with farmers and workers across the world who work hard to provide the things that we depend on. We are invited to 'put fair trade into our break' and can let our imaginations go riot as we dream up ways of celebrating Fairtrade Fortnight.

However hard they work to provide the things we depend on, millions of smallholder farmers in developing countries aren't paid what they deserve. Many are paid prices too low to provide for their families, trapping them in poverty. Farmers get a better deal when they sell their crops and fair trade terms, leading to a better and more stable income. This helps them break the cycle of poverty that they are trapped in.

So let's get planning! If you run a regular meeting, why not serve fairtrade cookies or biscuits with your tea and coffee? Snack packs of Liberation Nuts or bananas would make a healthy alternative.

Could you organise a coffee morning with snacks or cakes baked with fair trade ingredients? A fair trade themed meeting could make use of the many resources available, including films which tell the story of producers whose lives have been transformed by fair trade. (I would be happy to offer suggestions.)

Invite your friends and neighbours to a fair trade coffee morning. Just a few ideas to get you thinking.

I'm sure you don't need reminding that Easter is on the horizon. Did you know that the Meaningful Chocolate Company sells Easter eggs which include an attractive storybook? They also have a 'Super Sharing Box' which contains 30 Midi eggs and activity posters and worksheets. This could be a helpful way of sharing the Easter story.



Don't forget that Wolverhampton Fairraid stocks everything you need to make your Fairtrade Fortnight event a success and we will be ordering the full range of Divine and Real Easter eggs shortly. Come and enjoy a cuppa while you browse. You will be amazed by the variety of fairtrade goods available, each with a story of families lifted out of poverty.

Brenda Shuttleworth

Any views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the editorial team, Beckminster or the Methodist Church. All details published in this newsletter were accurate at the time of going to press.