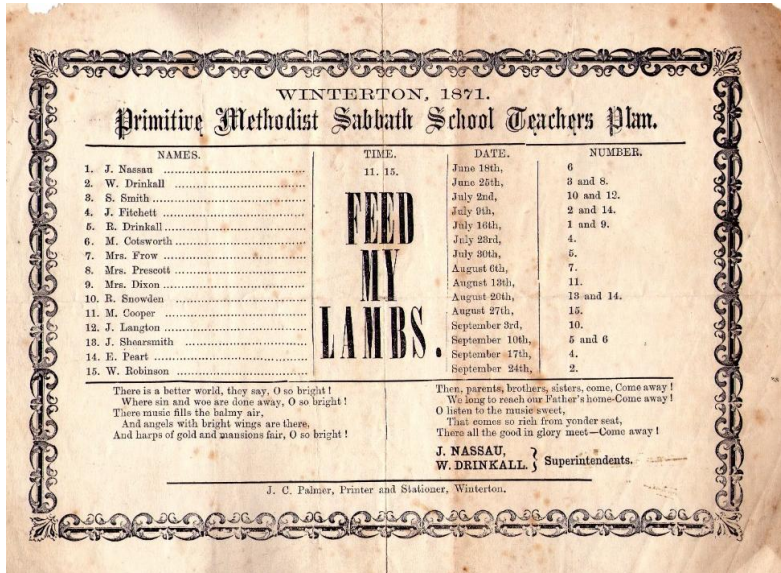


Englesea Extra

No. 59: Wednesday May 3rd 2023

Price: justice

Strange Times



'Feed My Lambs' is the exhortation in large letters in the centre of this unusual PM Sabbath School Teachers Plan from 1871. We know how seriously the Primitive Methodists took this, as Sunday Schools flourished, and pamphlets and books were printed with this sole purpose in mind. Why? Because the Prims were inspired by their faith and took seriously the words of Jesus to Peter 'Feed my lambs', to care for and tend those most vulnerable in our society, to feed them spiritually as well as physically.

Learning has always been central to the work here at Englesea Brook, and this edition of Englesea Extra reflects how this has been at the heart of our work over the past month.

This week, Elizabeth has been down in Bristol for the Global Methodist Schools conference (more in her article later) and Tim was welcoming the delegates from all over the world at Southlands. Another article tells of the partnership being developed with both the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Weston Village Primary School on a Peace Project.



We were delighted to welcome the Year 1 children from the STAR Academy Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent this week. They had a lesson with 'Sister Smith', a typical Victorian snack of water and carrot sticks (not widely appreciated by all!), and play time with yo-yos, pop-guns, skipping ropes, hopscotch and spinning tops. But their favourite bit was learning about the work that children had to do in Victorian times – and then set to work cleaning the chapel – mopping, dusting and sweeping. The chapel is gleaming!



Feeding lambs is rewarding – and fun!

Every blessing

Ruth

Pause for thought

Dissent is central to any democracy

Harry Belafonte

Learning at the Museum

Elizabeth worked with students from Adelaide School over 5 weeks and this was the write up in their Spring Newsletter.



<https://engleseabrook.org.uk/>



Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum is in the village of Englesea-Brook, Cheshire, England. Built in 1828, the chapel was one of the earliest chapels of the Primitive Methodist movement, and the Sunday school was added in 1914. Since 1986 it has been a museum of Primitive Methodism.

This term pupils from school and The Link have been visiting the Chapel for some amazing workshops and activities.

"What a fantastic afternoon at Englesea Brook Chapel with KS3. Students explored the Chapel's museum and artefacts, played instruments and experienced being behind bars! Over in the cottage students opened Hugh Bourne's story chests to discover objects, create their own wooden trains, lego chapel's and make prints using blocks from an antique printing press. We were fully immersed in the history, creativity and storytelling of the Primitive Methodist religion".

Mrs Gears -RE Teacher



Transforming lives

Elizabeth Morris, Learning Officer at the Museum writes about her visit to the April 2023 Methodist Education International Conference : Transforming Lives:



As part of a linked series of three events in London, Cambridge and Bristol, each focused on a different stage of Methodist education, I went to Bristol Marriott Delta Hotel close to John Wesley's New Room. Together with Mandy, Education Officer at Bristol, and Gemma from Wesley's Chapel, London, we staffed a very large stand (see photo) to 'sell' our wares, well, our learning offers to schools. Both Mandy and Gemma were there from Thursday to Saturday; I went for the Friday only. They reported the stand had been buzzing and a good number of our leaflets had been taken. There weren't many takers for the 'Wear it like Wesley, Style it like Susanna or

Boss it like Bourne' which was dressing-up and taking a selfie, however, although a foreign delegate did want to buy a tricorne hat (not for sale)!

We had prepared a PowerPoint and presentation for two seminars for delegates to learn more about our sites and our programmes. We had around thirty at the first and twenty at the second from all across the world. It was a great opportunity to give out more leaflets and chat personally to educators. A delegate from Guatemala was particularly interested in Englesea Brook's story as there are still Prim churches worshipping there.

Between staffing the stand and the first seminar, we sneaked into one of the keynote presentations and although we couldn't stay for all of it, we heard from Estelle Morris who spoke about the necessary but somewhat broken relationship between politicians and educators, and Steve Chalke who told us his inspirational journey into faith and education and his passion for accessibility, which really chimed with me! I was particularly alert to Oasis Trust's new initiative of a secure school for young offenders that will take an holistic approach to education to build confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging, support and compassion, especially given the shocking statistic he quoted that 80% of young offenders are autistic. Perhaps the politicians need to listen to him and take a more holistic, accessible and compassionate approach to policy-making? They could learn a bit from the Prims' example, too!

The 19th century circuit plan

Tim Macquiban muses what can be learned from historic preaching plans.

Englesea Brook has a wealth of circuit plans from the Primitive Methodist Connexion collected and acquired over a number of years. Significant collections have been made from the now defunct Society of Cirplanologists who dedicated themselves to ensuring the survival of these vital signposts to the place of preaching within the life of the religious societies as well as the growth and development of preaching places in the mission of early Primitive Methodism.

Modern circuit plans are poor by comparison in providing the resources for helping to chart the development of Methodism. 19th century plans are by comparison a mine of information to indicate the importance of worship and preaching in the movement. Also of assessing where and how Primitive Methodism spread which has helped those who have engaged in studies of local history to plot how significant it was in certain areas of the country.

Such an area was the then remote area of North Shropshire in the marcher lands bordering Wales. Opportunities for the spread of Primitive Methodism came as transport links improved, particularly with the coming of the railways from the 1840s and the better roads and bridges of the later 19th century.

Two plans for the Oswestry Circuit survive in the scrapbook held by the Venables family now of Chester who originated from that area. They bear analysis as an indication of the wealth of materials that can be gleaned from such records. They date from 1876 and 1889. Both are headed by something doctrinal. In 1876, the summary of doctrinal beliefs held by the PMs are laid out, followed by a reminder of how these can be determined by current practice: "Slow singing and Late attendance at the Means of Grace are indubitable signs of a state of Backsliding" (a quote from W(illiam) Bramwell a revivalist Wesleyan preacher of the 1790s) In 1889 there are "Queries for all who think – to be answered by Conscience". "How much does a Preacher love souls who for slight reasons neglects his appointments?". "How much does that man love the members of his family who never prays with them?".

The major part of the plan lists all the dates of the services for both the Lord`s Day (Sundays) and Work-Day evening services. For the former, these were morning, afternoon and evening, typically at 10:30am, 2:30pm and 6pm with only (as befitted a predominantly agricultural area) three churches in Oswestry and Rhosymedre and one other in the morning. For the latter, there were between 8 and 10 appointments on weekday nights from Monday to Friday, in 43 places usually on a fortnightly basis. To fill these appointments there were in 1876 no fewer than 122 preachers listed (with a further one on trial and one auxiliary) each with a number which then was assigned to appointments on the plan.

Then there were numerous reminders of the dos and don`ts of preaching. If there were special services, then preachers must be informed. Only those sanctioned by the circuit meeting or were travelling preachers could preach. No one should swop appointments otherwise they could be relegated a place in the list. The Circuit LP committee comprised all the male local preachers (therefore the assumption is that there could be female but not voting preachers??) and seven others (named as circuit representatives including L. Nunnerley a relative of the Venables family).

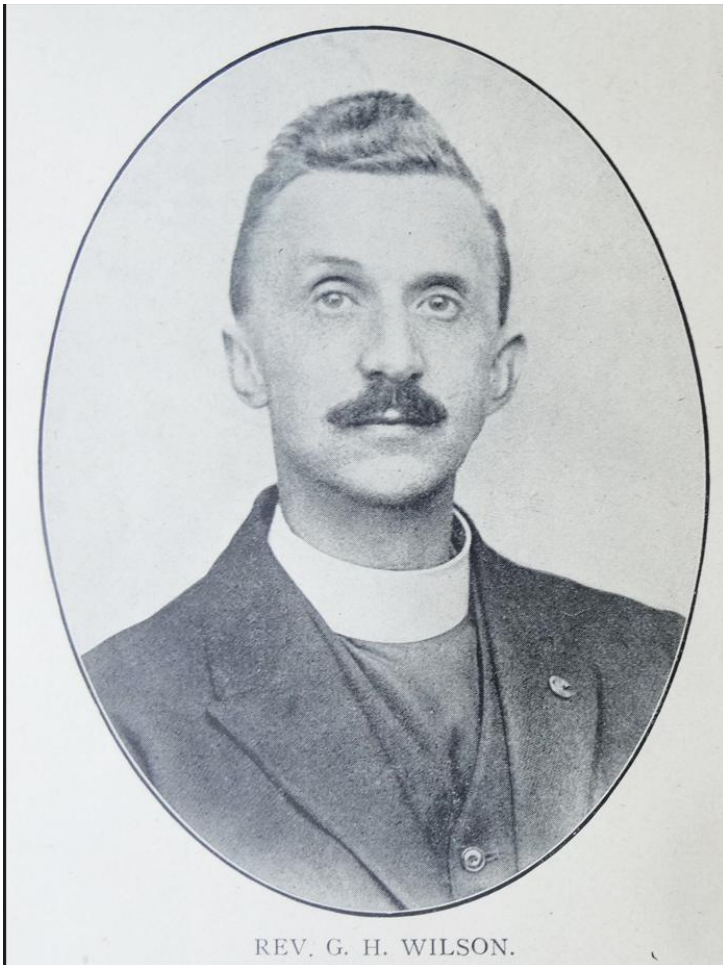
Special services, such as chapel anniversaries, Sunday School anniversaries and special sermons (for particular causes?) were listed according to the venues as were the lectures, at Stanwardine on the subject of "Rev. W. Clowes: his life and work", and at Hindford on "The Glories of the Bible". Other meetings were listed, of the Sunday School Union (including two days devoted to prayer and the "conversion of our scholars") and missionary meetings at 7pm on weeknights with local preachers and assigned ministers in attendance. An intriguing entry at the bottom reads "Sabbath Day Ticket Renewings", presumably of membership tickets allowing access to holy communion? The society stewards of each chapel were listed, with responsibility for the local worship arrangements, including E. Venables of Frankton Locke. Each of them was to "supply written notices of all the services and collections to be held and made at his (sic) place of worship, must take charge of the Society`s Revenue, and to attend to its general interests" Rule 8, p.75, Conf. Min, 1875. Then circuit meetings were listed, including the Circuit Committee, the Sub Missionary Committee and the Quarterly Meeting, and the monthly meetings of the Sunday Schools. Life was full of meetings and services!!

The 1889 plan indicates fewer preaching places and the dominance of Oswestry as the principal chapel of the circuit, with four services on Sundays (1045am, 230pm, 530pm open air and 630pm) and a weekly weeknight service (Thursdays 8pm) served by 22 persons in mission bands and 49 local preachers (mostly living in Oswestry itself), assisted by one on trial, four exhorters and 18 auxiliaries of whom two were women and two ministers (presumably retired?). There are extra instructions given about baptisms (only on the first Sunday of the month and with due notice given). Clearly on this plan during the summer months to the beginning of October, there were camp meetings and open air services as well as harvest festivals and chapel anniversaries. A summary of membership numbers is listed, indicating 430 members in the circuit for the 16 chapels of which 144 were at Oswestry and the rest from between 6 and 30 members.

As a source for both family history and the development of local chapels and preaching places, and patterns of worship and spirituality, circuit plans are an invaluable source for any students of Primitive Methodism.

Randle's rummagings

As well as volunteering one day a week at Englesea Brook, I also spend a day at The William Salt Library in Stafford, even though it and the County Record Office are currently closed for an extensive rebuilding programme. William Salt was a London banker who spent his whole life, and a considerable fortune, collecting material relating to the history of Staffordshire, where both his father's, and his mother's, families had lived. When he died in 1863, his widow inherited the collection and five years later she arranged for Sotheby's to catalogue it for three sales that would have lasted for 12 days.



After the sale of his medals and coins, the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire persuaded her to cancel the sale of books and documents, and to present them to the county of Stafford, where they now form the basis of the county's foremost local studies library. All the original collection, and many of the later additions, are catalogued online, but some of them are only available through very brief typed lists, and it is a section of these that I am currently adding to the online catalogue.

One of the items I have added recently was simply listed as 'Notes on the Manifold Valley' [WSL, Misc 50]. In fact it is much more than random manuscript notes on this part of Staffordshire, near Wetton in the north of the county. It is a collection of paper cuttings collected by W. H. Bowers, a notable Staffordshire historian from the first half of the 20th century. The collection begins in 1925, and continues until 1957, just a year before Bowers died.

The first forty pages are almost exclusively devoted to the discovery of Saxon treasure found in caves in the valley by Revd G. H. Wilson, a Primitive Methodist minister. The treasure included gold and silver items: a gold ring an inch in diameter, a silver medallion $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter, brooches, other jewellery and coins, in excellent condition, dating back to Cenwulf, king of Mercia c.800, and later ones for Alfred (871-901), Athelstan (925-940) and others. Wilson had a particular interest in caves and caving and wrote at least two booklets on the subject, he had been working in the valley for 14 years.

The cuttings also show pictures of him dressed in 'Bardic' costume, taking part in Druidic ceremonies, including a procession on Sunday 12 Sept 1926 to Thor's Cave, which was led by Mr Ralph de Tunstall Sneyd of Fairview Hall, Leek, as chief bard and Revd Wilson as the Recorder of the Bards of North Staffordshire. A Welsh choir joined the procession and sung in Welsh in the cave. Revd Wilson gave several lectures on his finds, including one to the North Staffordshire Field Club.

Chris' conundrums

The focus in this edition of Englesea Extra on the Museum's educational work with schools follows on from last month's Conundrum which asked why we know relatively little about Primitive Methodist schools (despite the story of the one-legged rag time dancer, singer and comedian).

The Conundrum this month celebrates education in its wider sense. Prims knew that learning is a lifelong need and Primitive Methodist societies provided a diverse range of life-enriching activities.

The pictures on this page illustrate two of those activities - drama and sport. Thanks to Richard Collier who has sent in to My Primitive Methodists pictures of life at Moriah Primitive Methodist chapel in Bramley



Bramley Moriah Theatricals



Richard's wife's parents were regular worshippers at Moriah and his Father-in-Law, Joe Cooper, is was part of the highly successful chapel cricket team. You can see more pictures and read the story [here](#).

There are references to cricket on over 70 pages on My Prims and 60 with references to football. There's a job there to review them.

The hidden life of My Primitive Methodists

If ever you wonder about the value of the My Primitive Methodists website, have a look at comments on the [Rev John Harold Blackwell's page on My Prims](#):

In February this year, Jane Richardson contributed pictures to Rev Blackwell's obituary page - including one of Rev and Mrs Blackwell with Rev. Fred Jones and his fiancé Madge (Maggi) Forrester. Rev Jones is Jane's great uncle. In March, Flora Sewell, Rev Blackwell's daughter, seeing an obituary of her father for the first time, asked to be put in touch with Jane so they could share pictures and stories.

In April, Jane was back in touch to let us know:

Flora (Lorie) and I have been exchanging information about her father John Blackwell and my great uncle Fred Jones who were together at Hartley. It has been interesting (and moving) to speculate about those two young men in their student days nearly 100 years ago.

Thank the Lord for the My Prim website, and thank you to those who keep it up and running. Without it we never would have been in touch.

A Peace Garden at Englesea Brook

Elizabeth, our Learning Officer, met with the Headteacher at Weston Village Primary School just before February half term to see if he was interested in working with us – he was very enthusiastic. The school is keen to develop good community relations and to encourage the children to care for their environment – so Elizabeth mentioned the idea of a Peace garden, reflecting the Primitive Methodist pacifist history -and a joint Peace Project was born! With the closing date for SIF Grant Applications rapidly approaching, Elizabeth and I put together a bid, joining forces with John Cooper (Trustee of Englesea Brook and Director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation) who also submitted a bid to the Christian Peace Education Trust. Both funding bids were SUCCESSFUL! So the Peace Project will run a series of Peace workshops at the school, using stories of PM Conscientious Objectors, create a Peace Garden, and work with a sculptor to build a Junk Model structure reflecting peace, behind the museum store.

We have been fortunate to find a very helpful landscaper to work with us, but as it is such a sloping site and we are on a tight budget, we need to beg and borrow (OK, beg!) building materials and garden equipment to keep within our budget. If anyone can help us in any way, please contact Elizabeth or Ruth. Here are the 'Before' photos – we will keep you posted of the progress!



Want to learn more about old Methodists online?



**Local Population Studies Society
Spring Conference 2023**

Non-conformist Local Population History

This year's Local Population Studies Society Conference is about Non-conformist Local Population History. Philip Thornborow is leading a session on available sources for the study of members of the Methodist movement.

The Conference is on May 3rd both on line on Zoom and in the New Room, Bristol. Full details and applications (by May 3rd) at: <http://www.localpopulationstudies.org.uk/conference/>

Dates for the Diary

Heritage Services:

Sunday 7th May at 3pm
with Rev Helen Kirk
'Politics of Faith'

Crafty Ranters:

Friday 12th May from 11am-1pm
– Radical Notebooks
(notebooks will be supplied, please bring old magazines to rip up)

NEW for 2023 - Friday Forum Theatre

– Friday 12th May 7.00-8.30pm. To book, email: learning@englesea-brook.org.uk Tickets £8.




Please bring your friends to support this new venture

Children's Activities for May Half Term

– Thurs 1st – Sunday 4th June: Kids Take Over the Museum!

Copy and publication dates for Englesea Extra 60

The next Extra will be published on Wednesday June 7th. Your article, ideas, photographs by Friday June 2nd please.






LIZZIE'S STORY

Friday 12th May, 7-8.30pm

Lizzie Vernon's experience of family, poverty, injustice and the workhouse in 19th century Winsford. A true story, researched, written and performed by Elizabeth Morris. Followed by a discussion of the issues raised.

Tickets £8. Pay on the door.
Book your seats at learning@englesea-brook.org.uk
Not suitable for under 14s



Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum, Englesea Brook Lane, CW2 5QW
Parking available.

www.englesea-brook.org.uk. Registered Charity No. 1132237

And a final prayer from Mary Bosanquet, Methodist Preacher (1739–1815)

Day by day, O God, we praise you, feel you near and prove your faithfulness. Daily we long to live according to your word, daily to know you as all in all.