

Englesea Extra

No. 84: February 2026

Price: justice

Strange Times

This year marks 40 years since the Chapel and Museum opened to the public. Look out for an event in the coming months to celebrate this achievement. Last week, I spent time with Tim Macquiban who generously gave his archival expertise to help me sift through 4 files of papers from Stephen Hatcher, detailing the early beginnings of Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum. What a treasure trove it turned out to be!



These photos of the site were taken some time in the 1980s and reflect just how much has changed over the past 40 years. Things need to change – and the staff and volunteers, as I write, are preparing new exhibits and displays for when we reopen on Thursday 2nd April. But some things remain the same. The very first item accessioned to the collection was a painting of Mow Cop by E Howell. Our artefacts receive consistent and assiduous care so the story of the Primitive Methodists can be told for generations to come.



Tucked amongst invoices, letters from donors and minutes of meetings was this hymn entitled: New Hymn 'The Faithful Methodist' Ordoyno, Nottingham. I include it as we approach the season of Lent, an opportunity to pause and reflect on what has changed (not least a move away from gendered language in our hymns) and what remains the same, today and always.

The hymn-writer finds an impressive array of words to rhyme with 'Methodist'!

1. *The Saviour's name I'll gladly sing,
He is my Saviour and my King!
Where'er I go his name I'll bless,
And shout among the Methodists.*

2. *The Devil's camp I'll bid adieu,
And Zion's peaceful way pursue,
Ye sons of men, come, turn and list,
And fight like valiant Methodists.*

3. *It is Religion makes the man,
The world may try to make it vain,
But I would give the world for this
To be in heart a Methodist.*

4. *Come sinners turn unto the Lord,
And closely search his precious word,
And when you do his truth possess,
You may become a Methodist.*

5. *Come unto me and you shall know
What a dear Saviour can bestow;
His love to me I can't express,
Although I'm call'd a Methodist.*

6. *A Methodist it is my name,
I hope to live and die the same,
O may I always live in peace,
And die a faithful Methodist.*

Every blessing Ruth

Pause for thought:

A hungry man is not a free man.

Adlai Stevenson, lawyer, politician, and diplomat (5 Feb 1900-1965)

The Alsager Book Emporium

Have you visited the Book Emporium's Facebook page? You can find the Facebook page here:
https://www.facebook.com/alsagerbookemporiumforengleseabrook/?locale=en_GB

With some modesty – but absolute accuracy – it describes the Emporium with its 60,000 second-hand books at bargain prices on all sorts of topics as "*probably the best second-hand charity bookshop in the north west*".

Hassall Road Book Emporium, Hassall Road, Alsager. Open Friday and Saturday. 10am-2pm.

Accreditation news

Back in July, Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum was invited to apply again for re-accreditation. Accreditation, in the heritage world, is the equivalent of OFSTED and on Friday last, 30 documents were finalised and 24 of the mandatory documents uploaded to the Arts Council portal – 2 ½ weeks before the deadline!

This has been a group effort in many ways, Elizabeth as Learning Officer has produced a Learning Plan and an Access Plan and trustees and volunteers have been involved at various stages. Amy, as Heritage Officer has borne the brunt of the burden, reviewing, amending and rewriting Documentation plans and policies, Collection plans and policies, a Care and Conservation plan, a Security audit, and her *piece de resistance* the 76-page Emergency Plan!!

So what is Museum Accreditation? It is the UK industry standard for galleries and museums, confirming they are well-run, securely manage collections, and provide quality visitor experiences. Managed by [Arts Council England](#), it boosts reputation, helps secure funding, ensures ethical practices, and applies to institutions of all sizes, from national to volunteer-run.

The central document produced is the Forward Plan, what are going to be our priorities for the next 3 years. They are four-fold:

1. **Increasing footfall and diversifying audiences.** We want to get ourselves on the map, shout about what we do, welcome busloads to the museum on a daily basis. OK so the last one is ambitious, but we are aiming high!
2. **Growing and sustaining the volunteer base.** Our volunteers are the life blood of this project – the fun, commitment, enthusiasm, knowledge, and energy that they bring rubs off on the staff and visitors alike – but without a few more, how are we going to supply enough cups of tea and a warm welcome to the daily busloads?? Is there anyone you know looking to offer a few hours a week/fortnight/month who could be asked to be a volunteer?
3. **Improving financial sustainability.** This is a big one! Times are hard, demands on grant-making bodies ever greater. But all at Englesea Brook remain committed to keep the site free to visit – so that means finding ways to increase our income in other ways. The Book Emporium is a fabulous source of funding, and there are fundraising events throughout the year. However, new ideas – and donations – welcome!
4. **Strengthening Englesea Brook as a welcoming, inclusive space, particularly for marginalised groups.** This is at the heart of the Primitive Methodist story, and is at the heart of where we want the Chapel and Museum to be. This year, we are hoping to develop sessions and worship for those with dementia and their carers. If any of you want to be involved in any way, please do get in touch. Elizabeth is developing her work with SEND children and families – and there's more to be done. Please pray for staff, volunteers and trustees as we continue to discern what that could look like.

We're not sure when we will hear if we have been re-accredited but we'll let you know as soon as possible!

Randle's rummagings

In the last Englesea Extra were extracts from one of the Household Annuals created by members of the Phillipson family, which we hold at Englesea Brook. This month we have more from the same source, taken from the volume for 1918, labelled 'Victory Year'. Some members of the family were serving as soldiers in France, and the following is taken from one of their letters home:

'The war cloud no longer hangs over us; the days of bitter anguish & dreadful anxiety are past. No longer can we hear the thunder of the guns or see the flashes in the western sky as they send forth their messages of death, no longer do we lie down at night in fear lest German aeroplanes drop their load too near nor lie awake counting the bombs as he drops each one a little nearer than the one before. There is a strange silence everywhere. For a new day has dawned. God grant that it may be a better and fairer day than this old world of ours has yet known.'

At the back of the 1918 volume is a pocket containing two monetary notes, for 1 franc and 50 centimes, with the note: *Specimens of paper money issued by the Chambers of Commerce of various French towns . . . one town looks somewhat askance on the paper money of another.*



Two pictures from this volume are on a lighter note. The first is labelled 'A Blustery Day' and is accompanied by a verse:

Whenever another's hat ascends
Our laughs with other laughter blends;
But when we lose our own, our best,
We somehow fail to see the jest.



The second picture is labelled 'Some Studies of Cat Life' and includes a feline photographer holding up a mouse by its tail to make the kitten smile.

We also have in the collection a clock which carries the inscription: *Presented to Rev J. E. Phillipson as a token of esteem & affection from the Primitive Methodist Sunday School Runcorn, June 15th 1924.*



What's on at the Museum?

New season preview

Wednesday 1st April 2pm

All Friends of Englesea Brook are invited to a special Preview of the new exhibitions and exhibits prior to reopening to the public on Thursday 2nd April. Come along and find out about Primitive Methodists at work, how they challenged poor working conditions and began the Trade Union movement. See the new layout and visit our very own indoor forest.....

This will be followed by afternoon tea at 3pm. More details to follow!

Heritage talks

Saturday 21st February at 11am



Dr. Tom Dobson's talk will be "What did you do during the War? Westminster College and the impact of warfare on the training of Methodist teachers". Dr Tom Dobson is a Social Historian whose current research focuses on links between Methodism and The State. His 2024 PhD ("People, Place and Policy. Westminster College and the Development of Methodist Teacher Training") explored the links between Methodism, public policy, and teacher training. It focused heavily on Westminster College, the Methodist teacher training institution which relocated to Oxford in 1959. Westminster College remains a research area for Tom, along with: the use of digital heritage platforms; forming links between Methodist Heritage and everyday Methodist practices; the role of 'Place' within Methodist history; and exploring the wider idea of 'A Methodist Identity'.

Zoom link:

<https://zoom.us/j/96696191020?pwd=6YcieBWI2PiWFblacG6vgzDkokXVy5.1>

Meeting ID: 966 9619 1020

Passcode: 404866

Saturday 21st March



The late Rev David Leese was due to give a talk on 'Methodism in Adam Bede'. On Saturday 31st January, the family and friends of Rev. David Leese celebrated his life, which he lived to the full. The support that he and Sue have given to Englesea Brook over the years is something we are profoundly grateful for. We would like to pay tribute to his knowledge and commitment by sharing this recording of a talk he did for us in October 2022. He had an open and curious mind, and I remember him saying just how much he had enjoyed researching this rather unusual subject. We will miss David's enthusiasm, but thank God for his lasting legacy of learning and insights such as this.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK80m_ZkiUU

Chris' conundrums

One of the delights of this job is the pictures that people send in either directly to the My Prims website or through the Museum, and the stories linked to them. Barry Hoole has recently contributed a picture of the ceremonial trowel used at the 1890 opening of Bethesda Primitive Methodist chapel, Lancashire Hill in Stockport. The trowel is unusual in that it includes a model of the head of Hugh Bourne. But not only that; Barry found it in a second-hand shop in Australia. How on earth did it get there?

Should you be going through Stockpot, we need a photo of the chapel. Although now a beauty salon, it still carries its Primitive Methodist heritage carved in stone. Location details on [the My Prims site](#).



These are the builders of [Greig Primitive Methodist chapel in Monmouthshire](#).

Not a smile amongst them and lots of hats – people who take their faith seriously! Thanks to Penny Jones for the picture.

I wonder how our Methodist members will seem in 100 years' time?

Englesea Diary

Heritage talks

February 21st @ 11:00 – 12:00 Methodist teacher training in wartime

More details of this Heritage talk on page 6

New season preview

Wednesday 1st April 2pm with afternoon tea at 3:00pm

New season opening

Thursday April 2nd Opening of the Museum for visitors

Copy and publication dates for Englesea Extra 85

The plan is to publish Extra 85 on Wednesday, March 18th. Contributions to Ruth by Friday, March 13th please.

And a final prayer from Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626)

We commend to you, O Lord, our waking and our sleeping, our going out and our coming in, our souls and our bodies, our words and our deeds, our life and our death, our household and our companions, our world and our neighbours.

Amen.