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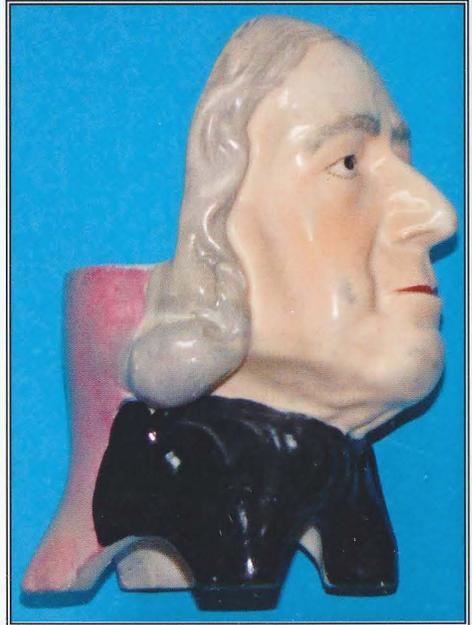
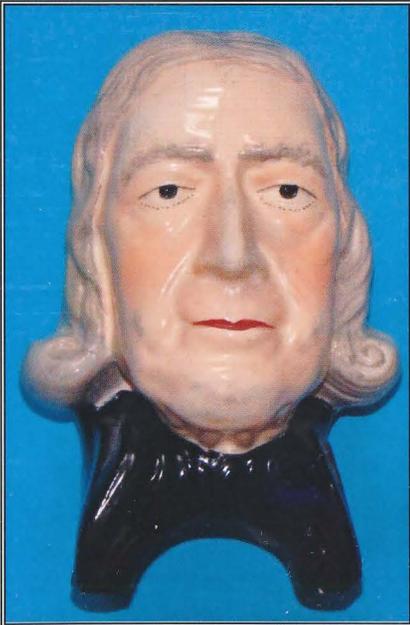
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Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society



THE WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

was founded in 1893 to promote the study of the history and literature of early Methodism. Over the years the range of its interests has been enlarged to include the history of all sections of the Methodist Church which were united in 1932, other Wesleyan and Methodist Connexions and United Churches which include former Wesleyan or Methodist denominations.

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Demography and the Decline of British Methodism, III Mortality¹

In the first two articles in this series,² we considered the possible implications of procreation by its members and adherents on the numerical fortunes of the Methodist Church, as exhibited in changing attitudes and behaviours with regard to marriage and fertility. In this final essay, we shall be turning our attention to the opposite end of the life-cycle and reviewing the evidence base for the statistical impact of mortality on British Methodism.

Death is no stranger to Methodist historical literature, of course, but it has almost invariably been studied in an experiential or theological setting, for example in writings about John Wesley's teachings on the subject,³ death-bed scenes in evangelical biography,⁴ the rituals and customs associated with bereavement,⁵ and the evolution of funeral liturgies.⁶ However, there has been, as yet, no systematic treatment of the Methodist laity from the perspective of historical demography, strictly defined, such as would be analogous to the exemplar study of the Quakers by Richard Vann and David Eversley,⁷ although the demographic aspects of death and the Methodist ministry have attracted some attention (which will be summarized later).⁸ Even for contemporary times the most pertinent study of the mortality of the Methodist laity is for Northern Ireland, reflecting the fact that data there support census-based longitudinal research in a way that is impossible on mainland Britain.⁹ In

¹ The author is grateful to Professor David Voas (University of Essex) for commenting upon a draft of this article.

² Clive Field, 'Demography and the decline of British Methodism, I: nuptiality', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. 58, no. 4 (February, 2012), 175-89 and 'Demography and the decline of British Methodism, II: fertility', *ibid.*, vol. 58, no. 5 (May, 2012), 200-15.

³ Wesley Chambers, 'John Wesley and death', in John Stacey (ed.), *John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1988), pp. 150-61; Kenneth Collins, 'John Wesley and the fear of death as a standard of conversion', in Kenneth Collins and John Tyson (eds), *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), pp. 56-68, 262-6.

⁴ Henry Rack, 'Evangelical endings', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, vol. 74, no. 1 (Spring, 1992), 39-56; Richard Bell, "'Our people die well'", *Mortality*, vol. 10, no. 3 (August, 2005), 210-23.

⁵ Jacqueline Williams, 'Death in Methodism, 1780-1880' (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 1995) and 'Methodist Families, c. 1850-1932' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 2003), pp. 288-353.

⁶ David Chapman, *Born in Song* (Warrington: Church in the Market Place Publications, 2006), pp. 218-41.

⁷ Richard Vann and David Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 186-238.

⁸ Kenneth Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 183-93; Timothy Allison, 'An Historical Cohort Study of Methodist Ministers Examining Lifespan and Socioeconomic Status' (unpublished M.Sc. thesis, University of Manchester, 1995); Timothy Allison and Selwyn St Leger, 'The life span of Methodist ministers', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, vol. 53, no. 4 (1999), 253-4; John Lenton, *John Wesley's Preachers* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), pp. 385-401.

⁹ Dermot O'Reilly and Michael Rosato, 'Religious affiliation and mortality in Northern Ireland', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 66, no. 7 (April, 2008), 1637-45.

the absence of any official (governmental) statistics, we will be focusing on the potential uses of the Church's figures on the deaths of Methodist members and on sources which permit the calculation of mean ages of death of the Methodist laity.

Membership returns

The various branches of Methodism began to record the number of deaths of members during the second half of the nineteenth century. The Wesleyan series, commencing in 1864, is the most useful. This is partly because of the size of the connexion (which helped to flatten the year-on-year fluctuations in mortality which are to be found in the smaller denominations), but mainly on account of the progressive capture of data on other sources of gain and loss, which enable a detailed picture of membership stocks and flows to be built up. This practice was continued by the Methodist Church after 1932.¹⁰ The figures can be analysed in three different ways, each of which demonstrates how death has become increasingly associated with Methodist decline.

First, we can investigate the relationship between the number of new and deceased members (Table 1). The basic question to be answered is: did recruitment compensate for losses through death? The table shows that in the 1880s the mean of new members per annum exceeded deaths by a factor of 9.3. Thereafter, the absolute number of new members steadily fell and of deaths rose. Notwithstanding, on the eve of Methodist union there were still 4.2 times as many new Wesleyan members each year as deceased ones. By the 1940s and 1950s the surplus of new members had been reduced to double. The first year in which deaths surpassed new members was 1969, and from the 1970s there have invariably been more deaths than new members, so that by 2001-10 the former outnumbered the latter by 1.5. Thus, one reason why Methodism has declined so rapidly in the later twentieth century is because it cannot replace through recruitment, perhaps partly because of lower fertility linked to the practice of family limitation (discussed in our second article), the members which it is losing to death. Some might say, simplistically, that Methodism is literally 'dying out'.

Of course, death is only one source of Methodist membership loss, and it is essential that it should not be studied in isolation. Table 2 therefore examines the statistical relationship between the three principal causes of loss: death, lapsation (ceasing to meet, in Methodist parlance) and transfer losses (in other words, the net balance of losses over gains by transfers within circuits, between different Churches, and between different countries). In the 1880s ceasing to meet accounted for the majority of losses in Wesleyanism (58.5 per cent), followed by net transfers (29.6 per cent), with death on a modest 11.9 per cent. Thereafter, the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Methodist Church have steadily eroded both lapsation and transfer losses, actually turning the latter into a source of net gain from the 1980s (this is, in substantial measure, apparently linked to the adjustment of the membership returns to

¹⁰ The picture has been most intensively studied for 1950-98, by Clive Field, 'Joining and leaving British Methodism since the 1960s', in Leslie Francis and Yaacov Katz (eds), *Joining and Leaving Religion* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000), pp. 57-85.

incorporate local ecumenical partnerships). This represents, at least superficially, improved retention of members, which is something of an unsung achievement of the Methodist Church. However, the proportion of losses attributable to deaths has shot up almost sixfold over the 13 decades covered in Table 2, exceeding three-fifths from the 1980s and currently standing at two-thirds. It may well climb still further since, of the three factors, death is obviously the one over which the Church has no control.

A third method of interpreting membership deaths is to calculate a crude mortality rate per 1,000 members (Table 3). In the Wesleyan Church the rate fell steadily from 17.1 in the 1860s to 11.8 in the Edwardian era, probably reflecting the success of various late-Victorian initiatives to recruit young members (including the introduction of a category of junior membership in 1881 and the launch of the Wesley Guild in 1896). It then began to rise, with an initial peak in the 1910s, especially between 1916 and 1920 (doubtless related to deaths as a result of the First World War and the 'Spanish' flu pandemic). By Methodist union the rate was back to the level it had been in the late 1870s. All these figures are decennial means. Non-Wesleyan mortality has only been calculated for census years, which, given the smaller size of the branches, introduces a degree of volatility. In general, the Wesleyan rate was lower than for the Primitive and United Methodist traditions, Robert Currie explaining the Wesleyan-Primitive differential in terms of social class disparities and the concentration of Primitives in regions of high mortality.¹¹ Nevertheless, all three groupings experienced relatively fewer deaths before 1900 than English and Welsh adults as a whole but began to exhibit rates higher than the norm during the ensuing 30 years. By 1931, when the national mortality rate was 13.8, the Wesleyans stood on 13.9, the Primitives on 17.3 and the United Methodists on 14.5.¹²

After union the mean decennial mortality rate of Methodist members progressively worsened (Table 3), almost doubling over seven decades, from 15.4 per 1,000 in 1933-40 to 28.0 in 2001-10 and greatly exceeding the national average for persons aged 15 and above (which improved from 14.6 per 1,000 in 1971 to 10.7 in 2010).¹³ Ostensibly, therefore, Methodist members now die at almost three times the rate of English and Welsh adults. In reality, as Currie has suggested,¹⁴ this differential reflects the progressive ageing of Methodist members and their growing concentration in older age cohorts which experience higher mortality.¹⁵ Such ageing is one manifestation of the fact that Methodism was becoming less successful at recruiting new members but better at retaining existing ones. The trend, which can be quantified from the 1960s

¹¹ Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), pp. 100-1.

¹² Clive Field, 'Methodism in Metropolitan London, 1850-1920' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1974), pp. 294, 296.

¹³ National averages calculated from 'Death Registrations by Sex and Single Year of Age, 1961 to 2010, England and Wales' and 'Population Estimates, Quinary Age Groups for UK Constituent Countries, mid-1971 to mid-2010', both at <http://www.ons.gov.uk> [accessed 23 February 2012].

¹⁴ Currie, *Methodism Divided*, pp. 100-1; Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 51.

¹⁵ For national death rates by gender within quinary groups for quinquennial periods between 1841 and 2005, see *Mortality Statistics, General (Series DH1)*, no. 38 (2005), pp. 5-9.

(when there were censuses of the age of members in the Manchester and Stockport District in 1966 and the Bristol District in 1967), has affected all three forms of Methodist belonging: membership, attendance and affiliation. Thus, the mean age of Methodist worshippers in England rose from 41 in 1979 to 55 in 2005 (the latter being 15 years more than in the general population), with the proportion of Methodist attenders over 65 climbing from 25 to 47 per cent over the same period. Even among affiliates – those with the weakest attachment to Methodism – the number of over-65s has grown from 34.9 per cent in the 1980s to 45.5 per cent in the 2000s.¹⁶

*Mean ages of death*¹⁷

The Church's rising mortality, therefore, did not imply that the life expectancy of individual Methodists was falling. Far from it, for there was a common conviction that they actually lived longer than other people. George Stevenson, for example, surveying the graveyard of City Road chapel in London in 1872, commented on the 'remarkable longevity' of its occupants, 5.2 per cent reaching their eighties. He attributed this to the fact that 'they lived by rule . . . they chose religion as the basis of their daily conduct'.¹⁸ Seth Evans formed a similar impression from the oldest section of the Wesleyan cemetery at New Mills: 'longevity is a distinguishing feature of the district, judging from the number of memorials of those who have attained to patriarchal age', 9.0 per cent dying in their seventies and 3.8 per cent in their eighties.¹⁹

Prolongation of life was cited as the first of six reasons for going to Highbury Wesleyan chapel by Joseph Bush in 1858; 'God . . . has so adapted His laws to your constitution that your body will wear longer if you keep His laws than if you break them'.²⁰ The same argument was being advanced by another London Methodist church 80 years later; 'to keep fit in body, mind and spirit THE best safeguard is to observe the SABBATH DAY by attending the SUNDAY SERVICES'.²¹ In 1973 an analysis by Tom Cullingworth of the ages of death given in obituaries in the *Methodist Recorder* compared with a control group drawn from the *Nottingham Evening Post* prompted the journalistic claim of 'Read the *Recorder* and live longer'.²² As recently

¹⁶ Clive Field, 'Zion's people: who were the English Nonconformists? Part 1', *Local Historian*, vol. 40, no. 2 (May, 2010), 100-3. It should be noted that the population census only provides viable data on the ages of Methodists in Northern Ireland. In England and Wales, although a question on religion was included in 2001 and 2011, it did not differentiate between individual Christian denominations.

¹⁷ Throughout this section mean ages of death have been computed on the basis of age at last birthday. No account has been taken of the months, weeks and days an individual may have lived after that birthday, largely because this information was rarely available. This omission is likely to have artificially deflated the means, logically by around 0.5 years.

¹⁸ George Stevenson, *City Road Chapel, London and its Associations* (London: George J. Stevenson, [1872]), p. 607.

¹⁹ Seth Evans, *New Mills Wesleyanism* (New Mills: F. Thornley, 1912), p. 82.

²⁰ Joseph Bush, *Highbury Wesleyan Chapel* (London: Hayman Brothers, printers, 1858), pp. 12-13.

²¹ *Askew Road Methodist Church, Shepherds Bush, London* (London: the Church, 1937), p. 19.

²² *Methodist Recorder*, 30 August 1973.

as 25 June 2010 the Methodist Church issued an official news release proclaiming that 'Methodists live longer than the average Brit'.²³

Such assertions can be empirically tested, utilizing a range of evidence, including – as Stevenson and Evans suggested – potentially that of Methodist graveyards. These developed from the 1770s, as reflected in the survival among the pre-1837 Non-Parochial Registers at The National Archives of 261 burial or death registers for English Methodist chapels and seven for Wales.²⁴ However, only a very small minority of Methodist places of worship ever had their own cemetery, in seeming contrast with Quaker meeting-houses and early Baptist chapels.²⁵ There are likely to be three principal explanations for this. First, none of the Methodist connexions actually required the construction of a graveyard alongside a new chapel, leaving the decision to local discretion, presumably based upon an assessment of need and the availability and affordability of additional land. Second, the Anglican churchyard offered a universal interment facility to the entire community, especially in the countryside. Third, private cemeteries (from the 1820s) and public ones (from the 1850s) became increasingly important in towns and cities, even replacing churchyards (which were often closed as health hazards), and usually incorporating an unconsecrated section in which Nonconformists could be buried (indeed, sometimes offering wholly unconsecrated ground).

The domination – some described it as a monopoly of provision, certainly in rural areas – by the Church of England became a vexed issue as the nineteenth century progressed. Churchyards were consecrated land, and burial services there could only be conducted by Anglican clergymen according to the forms of the Book of Common Prayer, and upon payment of the appropriate fee. Moreover, as ritualism spread, some incumbents tried to enforce the 'rules' as they interpreted them, particularly in the case of funerals of children who had not received an Anglican baptism. This often resulted in confrontation with Nonconformists, Baptists naturally being foremost since they rejected infant baptism (they were the subject of the single most famous legal case, at Akenham, Suffolk in 1878-79),²⁶ but with Primitive Methodism also experiencing numerous burial grievances.²⁷

Wesleyan Methodists, who had traditionally looked to the Church of England for the rites of passage, were generally more comfortable with the idea of a funeral service being taken by an Anglican clergyman, and it was said in 1863 that two-thirds

²³ <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentogod.newsDetail&newsid=446> [accessed 23 February 2012]. The release (which was picked up by the *Daily Telegraph*, 26 June 2010, *Methodist Recorder*, 1 July 2010, *Church Times*, 2 July 2010, and BBC Radio Ulster, 4 July 2010) was inspired by Clive Field, 'Long-living Methodists', *British Religion in Numbers*, 24 June 2010, <http://www.brin.ac.uk/news/2010/long-living-methodists/> [accessed 23 February 2012].

²⁴ William Leary, *My Ancestors were Methodists* ([fourth] edition, London: Society of Genealogists, 2005), pp. 21-97.

²⁵ Kenneth Lindley, *Chapels and Meeting Houses* (London: John Baker, 1969), pp. 74-9.

²⁶ Ronald Fletcher, *The Akenham Burial Case* (London: Wildwood House, 1974).

²⁷ Timothy Larsen, *Friends of Religious Equality* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), pp. 54-5; Norma Virgoe, 'Burial rites and wrongs', *Wesley Historical Society East Anglia District Journal*, no. 109 (Autumn, 2007), [4-9].

of them were so conducted.²⁸ However, even the Wesleyans collided with the Church on occasion, both on the mainland and in Ireland.²⁹ One legal *cause célèbre* (*Mastin v. Escott*) was at Gedney, Lincolnshire in 1839-42 where the vicar had refused to inter the daughter of a parishioner because she had been baptised by a Wesleyan minister.³⁰ Several similar instances occurred at this time, including at Swaffham, Norfolk, where the curate (Walter Blunt) declined to bury the child of a Wesleyan local preacher. He later published a treatise denying the validity of Methodist baptisms, which elicited a strong Wesleyan riposte from George Osborn.³¹ Another – rather different – test case (*Keet v. Smith & others*) arose at Owston Ferry, Lincolnshire, in 1874-6, where the incumbent objected to the title Reverend appearing on the tombstone of a Wesleyan minister's daughter in the churchyard. The dispute, which was only resolved in favour of the Methodists by an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, prompted the *Methodist Recorder* to urge that the 'exclusive ministrations of Anglican priests in the national burying places should be superseded by a broader and less objectionable system'.³²

²⁸ *Methodist Recorder*, 5 June 1863.

²⁹ For Ireland see Colin Kirkpatrick, 'Methodist burial disputes in nineteenth-century Ireland', *Bulletin of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland*, vol. 17 (2012), 55-70.

³⁰ William Calverley Curteis (ed.), *A Full Report of the Case of Mastin v. Escott, Clerk, for Refusing to Bury an Infant Baptized by a Wesleyan Minister* (London: Crofts and Blenkarn, 1841); Charles Warren, *The Indeterminateness of Unauthorized Baptism* (Cambridge: J. and J. J. Deighton, 1841); *The Judgment of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Case of Escott against Mastin* (London: Thomas Blenkarn, 1842); *The Watchman*, 22 January and 8 July 1840, 13 and 20 July 1842; *Morning Post*, 4 July 1840, 29 January, 2 February and 14 May 1841; *The Times*, 21 September 1840; *The Standard*, 21 September 1840, 5 October 1842; *Morning Chronicle*, 3 November 1840; *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 6 November 1840, 5 February 1841, 8 July 1842; *Manchester Guardian*, 6 July 1842; George Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism* (sixth edition, London: Longman, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1870), vol. 3, pp. 424-6; George Osborn, 'The early years of Dr Osborn', *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, vol. 120, no. 10 (October, 1897), 772-4; John Munsey Turner, *Conflict and Reconciliation* (London: Epworth Press, 1985), p. 133; Mats Selén, *The Oxford Movement and Wesleyan Methodism in England, 1833-1882* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1992), pp. 339-41.

³¹ Walter Blunt, *Dissenters' Baptisms and Church Burials* (Exeter: P.A. Hannaford, 1840); George Osborn, 'Dissenters' baptisms and church burials', *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, vol. 64, no. 1 (January, 1841), 26-38. Selén, *Oxford Movement*, pp. 340-1 mentions two other instances of denial of burial on the grounds of baptism by a Wesleyan minister, in 1840 and 1861.

³² *Before the Judicial Committee of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, on Appeal from the Arches Court of Canterbury, Keet v. Smith & Others* (London: W. J. Perry, [1875]); *Judgment of the Lords of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on the Appeal of Keet v. Smith and Others* ([no place: no publisher, 1876]); *Morning Post*, 12 August 1874, 26 July and 2 August 1875, 22 January 1876; *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 14 August 1874, 5 March, 14 May, 11 June and 6 August 1875, 28 January and 4 February 1876; *Daily News*, 15 August 1874, 13 May, 5 June and 26 July 1875, 22 January, 24 April and 25 May 1876; *The Graphic*, 15 August 1874, 13 February, 12 June, 31 July and 7 August 1875, 29 April and 27 May 1876; *The Standard*, 13 May and 26 July 1875, 22 January 1876; *Sir Robert William Perks, Baronet* (London: Epworth Press, 1936), pp. 124-6; Turner, *Conflict and Reconciliation*, p. 133; Selén, *Oxford Movement*, pp. 91-2; David Leese, 'Are Wesleyan ministers Reverends?', *Journal of the Lincolnshire Methodist History Society*, vol. 6, no. 16 (October, 2010), 11-12.

The call was answered. The Burial Laws Amendment Act 1880, which owed much to the Wesleyan Henry Hartley Fowler,³³ was supposed to have settled matters by permitting Nonconformist ministers to officiate at funerals in churchyards, having given due notice, but an altercation at Tarporley, Cheshire in 1886, where the Wesleyan minister came under pressure from the rector to withdraw such notice (given upon the death of his own child), exemplifies continuing difficulties.³⁴ Other rows broke out at Gwinear, Cornwall in 1883 where the sexton, under instruction from the vicar, disrupted the burial by a Wesleyan minister of an unbaptised child;³⁵ and at Great Ashfield, Suffolk in 1891 when the priest-in-charge refused to bury the newborn twins of Wesleyan parents because they had died unbaptised and were thus 'flying about in hell'.³⁶ Further legislation followed in 1900, but Sir Robert Perks, the Wesleyan elder statesman, was still grumbling about Anglican intolerance over funerals in the 1930s.³⁷

This context is essential for an understanding of the data which can be gleaned from Methodist graveyards. The overwhelming majority of Methodists will have been interred in Anglican or municipal cemeteries, from whose records they cannot easily be identified as Methodists. Even where a Methodist burial ground was available, some Methodists may still have preferred interment in these Anglican or secular alternatives, for reason of principle or tradition or because they wished to be buried alongside other family members, notwithstanding their funeral service may have been held in a Methodist place of worship. On the other hand, some Methodist cemeteries may have been used by members of the local community whose ties with Methodism were peripheral, ancestral or perhaps non-existent (in cases where the Methodist graveyard was simply within easier reach than the churchyard, and/or the charges for burial were less). For these reasons, we should be wary of assuming that interments in Methodist cemeteries necessarily represent a cross-section of all Methodist deaths. Bearing this in mind, we can now examine the evidence from two areas of Methodist strength, West Yorkshire and Cornwall, deploying contrasting methodologies (Tables 4 and 5).³⁸

³³ Edith Henrietta Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler* (London: Hutchinson, 1912), pp. 124-5. For the background to the Act's passage, see: William Mackintosh, *Disestablishment and Liberation* (London: Epworth Press, 1972), pp. 274-82 and Ian Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1869 to 1921* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 98-100, 109-10, 130-3.

³⁴ *The Standard*, 3 and 6 April 1886; *Daily News*, 27 March and 3, 6 and 20 April 1886; David Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 31-2.

³⁵ Bernard Lord Manning, *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1952), p. 325; John Probert, *The Worship and Devotion of Cornish Methodism* ([Redruth: the author], 1978), pp. 102-3.

³⁶ David Bebbington, 'The Nonconformist Conscience' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1975), p. 37.

³⁷ *Sir Robert William Perks*, pp. 126-7.

³⁸ The tables contain aggregate data from the following chapels, mostly Wesleyan: WEST YORKSHIRE – Addingham, Birstall, Clayton, Clayton Heights, Draughton, Great Horton, Morley, Rawdon, Shelf (Wesleyan and Primitive), Wakefield and Yeadon; CORNWALL – Altarnun, Balwest, Bodmin, Boyton, Bray Shop, Callestick, Camelford, Chapel Amble, Chynhale, Coads Green, Connon, Copthorne, Crowlas, Crows an Wra, Cubert, Downhouse, Edgumbe, Escalls, Golberdon, Gunwen, Heamoor, Kelly Bray,

In the case of West Yorkshire mean ages of death have been calculated from published transcripts of burial registers for 12 chapels.³⁹ All entries have been utilized where gender, year of death and age of death were recorded; only a very small proportion lacked this basic information. Ideally, occupational differentials and causes of death would have been factored in, but these data were collected by just one chapel each, so this additional analysis could not be undertaken. The very low mean age of death in the nineteenth century is immediately obvious from Table 4, the 'life expectancy'⁴⁰ of both men and women trebling between 1821-40 and 1961-80. This trend was accentuated by the high incidence of mortality before the age of two, affecting just over one-third of males and almost three-tenths of females from 1821 to 1880.⁴¹ The proportion did not reach single figures for females until 1901-20 and for males until 1921-40. If deaths under the age of two are discounted (Table 5), then mean ages of death can still be seen to have increased throughout the 160-year period, especially from 1881-1900 (as public health and living standards improved), albeit by a lesser factor (of two) and from a higher starting-point. Women invariably lived longer than men, from 1861-80 after the effects of child mortality are removed, the gap being as much as 5.3 years in 1961-80 (Table 5). This reflected the fact that females were more likely than males to live into their eighties and beyond. Whereas the number attaining this age rose for men from 10.2 per cent in 1901-20 to 36.2 per cent in 1961-80, the corresponding increase for women was from 16.5 to 53.2 per cent.

A different approach has been pursued for Cornwall, where there were at least 83 Methodist graveyards, preponderantly in the east of the county and typically fairly small.⁴² Instead of burial registers, which were not always kept and/or have not survived, indexes of monumental inscriptions for 34 cemeteries have been analysed. Such inscriptions seem only to have been previously used in a Methodist context for their literary and theological content,⁴³ not as demographic sources, but it transpires that they have certain limitations in the latter role. Their utility obviously depends upon how many monuments endured in a legible state at the time of surveying (in this instance, by the Cornwall Family History Society during the early 1990s). Any which

Kilkhampton, Morwenstow Woodford, Nancegollan, Polyphant, Rilla Mill, St Just in Penwith, St Teath, Townshend, Trebullet, Tregadillet, Tregerest and Trenant.

³⁹ The transcripts have been published by Bradford Family History Society, Morley and District Family History Group, Wakefield and District Family History Society, and Wharfedale Family History Group.

⁴⁰ A convenient shorthand term, but slightly misleading, given that the analysis is based upon death cohorts rather than birth cohorts.

⁴¹ One-fifth of persons interred in these West Yorkshire Methodist cemeteries between 1841 and 1900 died as infants (under one year). The national average of deaths of infants per 1,000 live births hovered around 150 at this time; *Mortality Statistics, General (Series DH1)*, no. 38 (2005), p. 4.

⁴² Probert, *Worship and Devotion*, pp. 100-1.

⁴³ Oliver Beckerlegge, *Why Do We Mourn?* (Cornish Methodist Historical Association Occasional Publication, no. 23, Carharrack: the Association, 1993) and 'Charles Wesley in stone', *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society*, vol. 14 (2010), 61-72. There has also been a study of the aesthetics of Methodist gravestones: Duncan Sayer, 'Death and the Dissenter', *Historical Archaeology*, vol. 45, no. 4 (Winter, 2011), 115-34. The author is indebted to Dr Peter Forsaith for this last reference.

had been removed, damaged or become indecipherable prior to that date constitute so many deaths unavailable for analysis. However, it is also likely, particularly during the nineteenth century, that interments will often have taken place without the erection of a specific monument, probably on the grounds of cost. It is additionally clear from these Cornish indexes that infants and young children were frequently buried anonymously, without name or even gender being noted, and sometimes in communal plots. It therefore seems probable that monumental inscriptions underestimate deaths at the earliest ages; hence the proportion dying before their second birthday in Cornwall prior to 1880 was just one-third of the level found in West Yorkshire.

It is this last consideration which perhaps accounts for much of the superficially greater longevity of persons buried before 1900 in Methodist graveyards in Cornwall than in West Yorkshire, according to Table 4. Once mortality under two years is eliminated (Table 5), the pre-1900 gap between mean ages of death in the two counties is greatly reduced, while throughout the twentieth century people interred in Yorkshire Methodist burial grounds seem to have outlived their Cornish counterparts, on average. Certainly, by 1961-80, Yorkshire had overtaken Cornwall in terms of the proportion living into and beyond their eighties. In Cornwall, as in Yorkshire, mean ages of death have risen over the 160 years, with women again living longer than men, although the margin is narrowing (standing at 4.1 years in 1981-2000). By the end of the twentieth century 57.2 per cent of women interred in Cornish Methodist cemeteries died after the age of 80, against 38.2 per cent of men.

A second mechanism for determining the ages of death of Methodists is through the family announcement columns in the national Methodist newspapers. Death notices did not become plentiful until the twentieth century, and even then they will have represented only a very small fraction of the total deaths of Methodist members and adherents. Moreover, those who recorded the passing of their loved-ones in this way necessarily constituted a self-selecting sample, with willingness and ability to pay for the insertion of a notice being one factor in the 'selection' process (for instance, in late 2011 the *Methodist Recorder* charged £1.75 a word for all family announcements). The need to place a notice in a national publication may imply that the deceased had either been active and known in connexional circles and/or had been geographically mobile, with friends and acquaintances scattered throughout the country. A Methodist minister's wife would exemplify such a person. Presumably, if an individual had spent the whole of his or her life in one particular district, and was known only within that district, it would be sufficient to publicize the death in a local newspaper. Finally, a generational shift may be at work, with the tradition of placing a newspaper announcement, and of reading print media more generally, being stronger among older age cohorts than with younger.

With these reservations in mind, an analysis was undertaken of the death notices (excluding obituaries) for Methodist laity which appeared in the *Methodist Recorder* in 1938 (the first complete year in which it was the sole newspaper for British Methodism, following incorporation of the *Methodist Times and Leader* in 1937) and 2007-11 (a span of five years in reflection of the evident reduction in family

announcements in line with the decline of Methodism during the previous 70 years). Excluding notices where the age of death was not recorded, 814 cases were available for 1938 and 629 for 2007-11 (Table 6). The mean age of death for Methodist laymen rose from 70.5 in 1938 to 84.7 in 2007-11, and for laywomen from 74.4 to 89.6, or by around 15 years in each case. Although the methodology is not strictly comparable, we may note that the mean age of death for the subjects of obituaries in the *Methodist Recorder* in 1973 had been 77.9 for laymen and 83.0 for laywomen.⁴⁴ The proportion of males dying at age 80 and over almost trebled between 1938 and 2007-11, from 27.5 to 78.0 per cent, and more than doubled for females, from 41.7 to 88.9 per cent.

A third source of data about mean ages of death in Methodism is available for ministers, derived from obituaries in the minutes of Conference and other collective biographical tools.⁴⁵ During the eighteenth century the average age of death of itinerants was a surprisingly high 64.9 years, albeit lower for those who died on circuit.⁴⁶ In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the mean age of death in a sample of 953 ministers rose from 58.1 for deaths occurring in 1851-70 to 60.9 in 1871-90 to 66.2 in 1891-1910 to 70.7 in 1911-30. Over the whole 80 years Wesleyan preachers had the longest lives (67.7) and Bible Christians the shortest (61.7), but denominational variations were most marked before 1890 and narrowed greatly during the second half of the period (Table 7). Timothy Allison likewise reported a notable difference in life expectancy between Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist ministers born in 1850-54 which reduced, to reach a statistically insignificant level, for the 1880-84 birth cohort.⁴⁷ Kenneth Brown similarly detected a maximum gap of 3.2 years between the three main Methodist traditions in the mean ages of death of those entering the ministry from 1840 to 1919. For the generation commencing ministerial labours in 1890-1919 Wesleyans died at an average 73.7 years, Primitive Methodists at 74.9 and United Methodists at 72.0.⁴⁸ Since Methodist union the mean age of death of ministers has increased from 73.3 in the connexional years 1932-6 to 82.6 in 2007-11. The proportion of ministers dying in their nineties or one hundreds is now 22.8 per cent, whereas it was only 3.7 per cent in 1932-6.⁴⁹

Of course, this increase in the mean age of Methodist death mirrored what was happening in the wider society, where expectation of life at birth in England and

⁴⁴ *Methodist Recorder*, 30 August 1973.

⁴⁵ From the *Minutes* of Conference it is naturally also possible to calculate ministerial mortality rates (ministerial deaths in any given year expressed as a proportion of all ministers). The present author has undertaken such an analysis for all three Methodist traditions for each census year between 1851 and 1931. Predictably, the small numbers involved produce somewhat inconsistent results. Cf. Field, 'Methodism in Metropolitan London', pp. 294, 297.

⁴⁶ John Lenton, *My Sons in the Gospel* ([Wolverhampton]: Wesley Historical Society, 2000), pp. 20-1, 37; Lenton, *John Wesley's Preachers*, pp. 387-8, 437.

⁴⁷ Allison, 'An Historical Cohort Study', pp. 60, 63-76; Allison and St Leger, 'The life span of Methodist ministers', 253-4.

⁴⁸ Brown, *A Social History*, pp. 192-3.

⁴⁹ Calculated from ministerial obituaries in the *Minutes* of Conference for 1933-6 (N = 323) and 2008-11 (N = 232). Female presbyters, of whom too few die in any one year to permit meaningful analysis, have been excluded for the latter period.

Wales has risen from 40.2 years for males and 42.2 for females in 1841 to 76.9 and 81.1 respectively in 2003-5,⁵⁰ and to 78.4 and 82.4 in England at the time of writing. However, on the (admittedly) limited evidence reviewed here, mean ages of death do seem to have been lower in the general population than for Methodists, and for both sexes. For example, men dying in England and Wales in 1971 did so at an average age of 66.2 and women at 72.5, but those interred in Methodist cemeteries in West Yorkshire and Cornwall in 1971-80 reached 72.3 years in the case of men and 77.1 for women, 6.1 and 4.6 years older. By 2010 the mean age of death had risen nationally to 74.0 for men and 79.8 for women, yet it was still 10.7 and 9.8 less than the deaths of laity announced in the *Methodist Recorder* in 2007-11 and, for men, 8.6 years lower than the age at which Methodist ministers died.⁵¹

What might be the explanation for this apparently greater longevity of Methodists over non-Methodists, assuming that it cannot be discounted as more artificial than real, arising from inadequacies in our methodology and sources? A major influence is almost certainly differential class mortality, mean age of death being conditioned by occupational status and all the socio-economic circumstances (including level of income, standard of housing and quality of health care) associated with it. Although there are no empirical mortality data to verify the assumption, there can be little doubt that Methodism's progressive concentration in Registrar General classes II and III (intermediate non-manual, skilled non-manual and skilled manual workers), and its more limited appeal to semi-skilled and unskilled employees, must have helped to drive up the mean ages of death of Methodists relative to society as a whole.⁵²

However, there may also have been religious forces at play, or so many Victorian and Edwardian Methodists thought. Religions in general, and Methodism in particular, underlined the sanctity of the human body and the need to take good care of it, with consequent and positive implications for health and longevity. 'Our health belongs to God', William Rule wrote in 1852, counselling his readers: 'do not tamper with your health; do not undervalue that precious gift. It is a treasure that we are to spend for the wealth and the comfort of those who are around you'.⁵³ For George Stevenson religion 'contributes both to prolong life and to make it happy',⁵⁴ while William Unsworth judged it incumbent on Christians 'to "glorify God in your body" by guarding bodily life and health and not doing anything that would weaken your constitution or cut life short. That would be a sinful interference with God's sovereign prerogatives. As He is the Author and Giver of life, He only has the right to abridge it or to take life away at

⁵⁰ *Mortality Statistics, General (Series DH1)*, no. 38 (2005), p. 80.

⁵¹ National ages of death calculated from 'Death Registrations by Sex and Single Year of Age, 1961 to 2010, England and Wales', at <http://www.ons.gov.uk> [accessed 23 February 2012].

⁵² For an overview of the occupational profile of Methodists, see Clive Field, 'Zion's people: who were the English Nonconformists? Part 3', *Local Historian*, vol. 40, no. 4 (November, 2010), 292-302.

⁵³ William Rule, 'The claims of commerce, and those of life, health and religion', in William Rule (ed.), *Religion in its Relation to Commerce and the Ordinary Avocations of Life* (London: R. Needham, 1852), p. 321.

⁵⁴ Stevenson, *City Road Chapel*, p. 607.

His pleasure'.⁵⁵ For Thomas Waugh in 1906 'our bodies are a sacred trust and to be treated as such. They are the casket of the soul . . . the machinery through which the indwelling Spirit of God works out His glorious purposes.' They were, therefore, 'to be so kept for Him that He may get the most possible out of them for His glory and the blessing of those around us', avoiding 'injury of the body and its unfitting for such indwelling and using of God'.⁵⁶

The foregoing were Wesleyan views, but Primitive Methodists were in full agreement, one of their connexional newspapers describing religion as 'sanative, curative, hygienic',⁵⁷ with the handbook of the Primitive Methodist Social Service Union declaring: 'Life is a precious heritage. At its longest it is but short, and he wrongs himself, wrongs the community and wrongs his Maker who shortens it still further. He is a suicide who shortens his life by ten years, by ten months or by ten minutes, and the man who promotes or encourages a custom that cuts short the existence of his neighbour may very properly be classed with the murderer.'⁵⁸

Such sentiments help to rationalize how abstinence and avoidance of excess became bywords of Methodism. The Church's longstanding commitment to the temperance movement is the most obvious and best-known manifestation of prudential living, albeit the proportion of total abstainers among Methodist members probably never exceeded 50 per cent, even at its peak on the eve of the First World War (in contrast to 95 per cent in the ministry).⁵⁹ Alcohol certainly had a direct relevance to mortality, for the medical side-effects of over-indulgence were already understood in the late Victorian era, with statistics showing that abstainers had lower death rates than drinkers, and life assurance premiums being reduced accordingly.⁶⁰ There was perhaps less familiarity with the negative consequences of smoking, and less concerted Methodist activity against it. Notwithstanding early Methodist Conferences in Britain and Ireland railed against the use of tobacco,⁶¹ even John Wesley thought it had some medicinal properties.⁶² The anti-smoking campaign seems to have been strongest in Primitive Methodism, although for George Warner, the denomination's severest critic of tobacco, it was incompatibility with holiness rather than health which was the issue.⁶³ After Methodist union, it was not until 1974 that Conference adopted a statement which explicitly acknowledged the correlation

⁵⁵ William Unsworth, *Self-Culture and Self-Reliance under God the Means of Self-Elevation* (London: Elliot Stock, 1879), pp. 122-3.

⁵⁶ Thomas Waugh, *Twenty-Three Years a Missioner* (London: Charles H. Kelly, [1906]), pp. 90-1.

⁵⁷ *Primitive Methodist World*, 19 July 1888.

⁵⁸ Samuel Horton (ed.), *The England of the Future* (London: E. Dalton, 1909), p. 168.

⁵⁹ Clive Field, "'The devil in solution'", *Epworth Review*, vol. 27, no. 3 (July, 2000), 78-93. Cf. George Thompson Brake, *Drink* (London: Oliphants, 1974).

⁶⁰ Field, 'Methodism in Metropolitan London', pp. 298-9.

⁶¹ Henry Rack (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 10* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), pp. 315, 324, 483, 890, 893, 969, 973.

⁶² Donald Ryan, 'John Wesley, cigarette cards and his advice on tobacco', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. 58, no. 1 (February, 2011), 2-11.

⁶³ David Bebbington, 'The holiness movements in British and Canadian Methodism in the late nineteenth century', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, vol. 50, no. 6 (October, 1996), 208-9.

between cigarettes and lung cancer,⁶⁴ the Methodist chest physician Howard Williams becoming a leader of the no-smoking movement from the 1960s to 1980s.⁶⁵ It was a similar story with vegetarianism. Despite attempts to link it with John Wesley,⁶⁶ vegetarianism caught on late in Methodism, essentially during the interwar years (the Wesley Vegetarian Fellowship was established in 1938) and only ever a minority interest, mainly driven by animal welfare rather than health concerns.⁶⁷ Paradoxically, Methodist involvement in housing reform may have had a stronger connection with reducing mortality. This was definitely a key impulse for Harold Bellman, the Wesleyan pioneer of building societies.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Membership figures demonstrate that death has become an increasingly important feature of the numerical decrease of British Methodism. The trend emerged around the time of the First World War but has been very pronounced since the 1970s. The Methodist mortality rate is now almost three times the national average. This is not because Methodist life expectancy is falling, or lower than normal; indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that Methodists do live longer than non-Methodists, although this is probably the result of their relatively high social status as well as of their reputation for 'clean living'. The mortality rate is rising because Methodists are progressively ageing, and thus moving into cohorts which are more likely to die, making their population pyramid top-heavy; and because Methodism is much less successful at recruiting new members – whether from the 'outside world', other denominations or retaining its own children – to compensate for its losses through death. The reduced fertility of Methodist families, the direct consequence of the practice of birth control which the Church has officially sanctioned since the late 1930s, has not helped the situation. Indeed, in strictly demographic terms, of the three aspects of demography which we have considered in this series of articles, it is perhaps fertility which remains the factor of most potential interest in understanding Methodism's fading statistical prospects. This is notwithstanding the ostensibly close relationship between mortality and decline revealed by the membership data; at one level, Methodism is undeniably 'dying out', but death alone is probably not a sufficient explanation of Methodist declension in any causal sense. Much more research still needs to be undertaken in this area, to test our hypotheses and

⁶⁴ Methodist Church, *Statements on Social Responsibility, 1946-1995* (London: Methodist Church Division of Social Responsibility, 1995), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁵ Entry in *Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, <http://wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/dmbi/> [accessed 23 February 2012]; *The Times*, 20 March 2007.

⁶⁶ William Stroup, 'Meat, ethics and the case of John Wesley', in Regina Hewitt and Pat Rogers (eds), *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Eighteenth-Century Society* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2002), pp. 267-80.

⁶⁷ John Gilheany, *Familiar Strangers* (Cardiff: Ascendant Press, 2010), pp. 140-5, 161-4.

⁶⁸ Harold Bellman, *The Silent Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1928), pp. 55-6. Cf. Clive Field, 'Safe as houses', in Peter Forsaith and Martin Wellings (eds), *Methodism and History* (Oxford: Applied Theology Press, 2010), pp. 91-139.

conclusions more rigorously, but the relevance of historical demography to students of Methodism seems to have been established beyond doubt.

CLIVE D. FIELD

Table 1

Mean annual number of new members and deaths of members in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1875-1932 and the Methodist Church, 1933-2010

	new	deaths		new	deaths
Wesleyan Church			Methodist Church		
1875-80	45,804	5,668	1933-40	33,836	12,539
1881-90	49,801	5,351	1941-50	24,933	12,136
1891-1900	44,194	5,781	1951-60	26,353	13,039
1901-10	44,327	5,680	1961-70	17,858	13,515
1911-20	29,902	6,747	1971-80	11,281	12,631
1921-32	28,926	6,808	1981-90	11,626	11,306
			1991-2000	7,577	10,065
			2001-10	5,019	7,766

SOURCE: Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) to 1970; *Agenda and Minutes* of the Methodist Conference and Methodist Church Research and Development Cluster for subsequent data. New members include restored members from 1977.

Table 2

Causes of membership loss in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1881-1932 and the Methodist Church, 1933-2010 (percentages)

	deaths	ceased	transfers
Wesleyan Church			
1881-90	11.9	58.5	29.6
1891-1900	14.2	56.2	29.6
1901-10	14.5	55.9	29.6
1911-20	21.7	51.5	26.8
1921-32	27.3	50.0	22.7

Methodist Church			
1933-40	31.9	47.5	20.6
1941-50	41.3	47.3	11.4
1951-60	47.9	44.4	7.7
1961-70	46.9	43.9	9.2
1971-80	52.8	44.3	2.9
1981-90	62.9	43.3	- 6.2
1991-2000	61.1	42.3	- 3.4
2001-10	66.4	40.3	- 6.8

SOURCE: As Table 1. Losses to other countries were recorded from 1888 but gains from other countries not until 1963, making it impossible to compute a net transfer loss before the latter date; such losses for 1881-1962 have therefore been discounted from the table. Overall transfer losses for 2005 and 2006 have been estimated, consequent upon the Church's apparent failure to report in-transfers for those two years.

Table 3

Mean annual mortality rate of members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1864-1932 and the Methodist Church, 1933-2010 (per 1,000)

Wesleyan Church		Methodist Church	
1864-70	17.1	1933-40	15.4
1871-80	15.4	1941-50	16.1
1881-90	13.1	1951-60	17.6
1891-1900	13.2	1961-70	19.9
1901-10	11.8	1971-80	23.4
1911-20	14.2	1981-90	25.1
1921-32	13.9	1991-2000	26.8
		2001-10	28.0

SOURCE: As Table 1.

Table 4**Mean age of death of persons buried in Methodist cemeteries in West Yorkshire and Cornwall, 1821-2000 (including deaths under two years)**

date of death	men		women	
	West Yorks	Cornwall	West Yorks	Cornwall
1821-40	23.5	-	25.2	-
1841-60	24.0	36.9	26.5	34.0
1861-80	28.2	43.2	31.3	47.6
1881-1900	35.7	53.2	42.2	52.7
1901-20	53.3	54.2	60.0	59.9
1921-40	61.6	63.0	66.5	65.2
1941-60	69.0	67.5	71.2	71.9
1961-80	71.6	71.5	79.0	75.8
1981-2000	-	74.1	-	77.4

SOURCE: Transcripts of burial registers (West Yorkshire) and indexes of transcripts of monumental inscriptions (Cornwall). N = 15,707 burials (West Yorkshire) and 6,791 inscriptions (Cornwall).

Table 5**Mean age of death of persons buried in Methodist cemeteries in West Yorkshire and Cornwall, 1821-2000 (excluding deaths under two years)**

date of death	men		women	
	West Yorks	Cornwall	West Yorks	Cornwall
1821-40	35.9	-	35.8	-
1841-60	36.6	42.2	36.8	38.4
1861-80	42.9	48.5	43.7	51.4
1881-1900	51.0	56.5	53.0	55.6
1901-20	60.8	56.1	63.5	61.8
1921-40	64.6	63.6	68.1	65.7
1941-60	70.6	67.8	72.1	72.4
1961-80	73.7	71.7	79.0	75.9
1981-2000	-	74.1	-	78.2

SOURCE: As Table 4. N = 11,757 burials (West Yorkshire) and 6,610 inscriptions (Cornwall).

Table 6

Mean age of death of persons listed in the family announcement columns of the *Methodist Recorder*, 1938 and 2007-11

	men	men	women	women
	1938	2007-11	1938	2007-11
mean age of death (years)	70.5	84.7	74.4	89.6
dying at 80+ (%)	27.5	78.0	41.7	88.9

SOURCE: *Methodist Recorder*, 1938 and 2007-11. N = 814 death announcements (1938) and 629 (2007-11).

Table 7

Mean age of death of a national sample of Methodist ministers, 1851-1930

	died 1851-90	died 1891-1930	all
WMC	64.4	69.8	67.7
PMC	56.3	66.7	63.7
UMFC	59.7	68.9	66.0
BC	56.8	66.3	61.7
MNC	59.1	67.8	63.6
All	60.1	68.4	65.1

SOURCE: *Minutes of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Conferences for census years*, i.e. 10 per cent sample of Wesleyan (WMC) and Primitive Methodist (PMC) ministers; and Oliver Beckerlegge, *United Methodist Ministers and their Circuits* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), i.e. 100 per cent sample of United Methodist Free Churches (UMFC), Bible Christian (BC) and Methodist New Connexion (MNC) ministers. N = 953 deaths.

Correspondence between James Erskine and John and Charles Wesley

James Erskine (1679–1754) was the son of Charles Erskine, Earl of Mar and his wife Mary. Since his older brother John succeeded to their father's title, James trained for a career in law. He was made a Lord of Justiciary in 1706, taking the title of Lord Grange, and raised to the bench the same year. In 1710 Erskine succeeded Adam Cockburn of Ormiston as Lord Justice Clerk. While sympathetic with the Jacobite cause, Erskine took no part in the 1715 Rebellion, which allowed him to stay in favor with Presbyterians in Scotland and active in the General Assembly. When Robert Walpole succeeded in excluding Scottish judges from sitting in the British House of Commons, Erskine resigned his judgeship and was elected a Member of Parliament in 1734. He generally resided in London from that point on, even after leaving Parliament in 1747.

Erskine was drawn into Methodist circles in the early 1740s by George Whitefield, who brought him to the attention of the Wesley brothers.¹ In the first known reference by either brother, Charles Wesley commented on Erskine being 'quite broken down' by his sermon in April 1744.² Erskine was soon offering aid to both brothers in Methodist matters.³ He was particularly helpful to Charles Wesley when the latter was falsely accused of inappropriate behaviour in late 1744.⁴ Charles returned this favour in 1750 by helping restore the relationship between Erskine and his daughter.⁵

Given that Erskine was raised with Calvinist convictions, it is natural to wonder how he and the Wesley brothers negotiated their theological differences. Scholars have had access for some time to a few items of correspondence between Erskine and John Wesley that shed light on this question. The first item is an excerpt from a letter of Erskine to Wesley, written about 10 March 1745, that was published in a biography of Wesley shortly after his death.⁶ A transcription of Wesley's response, dated 16 March 1745, was included in the fourth edition of Wesley's *Works*.⁷ Erskine's reply in early April 1745 was reproduced in abridged form by John Wesley in his published

¹See George Whitefield's to John Wesley, October 11, 1742, in Frank Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26: *Letters, II: 1740-1755*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 87.

²See S. T. Kimbrough Jr. & Kenneth G. C. Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A., vol. II* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2007), p. 403.

³Note, for example, Erskine's role in redeeming the preacher John Nelson, in Kimbrough Jr. and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley*, vol. II, p. 405.

⁴Kimbrough Jr and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley*, vol. II, pp. 429, 434.

⁵*ibid.*, pp. 595, 597.

⁶See John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. 2 (London, Couchman, 1793–96), p. 195. The excerpt is republished (and dated about 10 March 1745), in Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, p. 124.

⁷John Wesley to James Erskine, 16 March 1745, in Thomas Jackson (ed.), *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., vol. 13* (4th edn., London: John Mason, 1840–42), p. 154. Reprinted in Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, p. 128.

Journal.⁸ A longer transcription of this reply (dated 3-4 April), along with another letter from Erskine to Wesley dated 4 September 1745, were included in a collection of letters written to John Wesley published in 1797.⁹

The original manuscripts for the items just listed do not appear to have survived. But a few other manuscripts have come to light in recent decades. Frank Baker drew attention to two in volume 26 of *The Works of John Wesley*, published in 1982. One is a memorandum in the Methodist Archives, dated 23 April 1745, that Erskine addressed to both Wesley brothers, commending their desire to maintain communion with evangelicals who differed from them on matters like predestination, while pointing out some practices of the brothers that he judged to deviate from this goal.¹⁰ The other is a brief letter from John Wesley to Erskine dated 6 July 1745, now held in Edinburgh University Library.¹¹ Two short manuscript letters from Charles Wesley to Erskine have also been located - one dated 1 August 1745, in Edinburgh University Library, and the other dated 12 September 1746, in The National Archives of Scotland.¹² These few items suggest that, while Erskine continued to hold moderate Calvinist convictions, his interactions with the Wesley brothers were irenic in spirit, championing focus on the essentials of practical Christianity over disputes about contested areas of doctrine.

The purpose of this essay is to introduce further evidence about this relationship that has recently come to light. This evidence is an inventory of the manuscripts of James Erskine that were passed down in his family. Specifically, there is a catalogue in The National Archives of Scotland of items in the estate of Lady Frances Erskine (1715-76), prepared by her trustees shortly after her death.¹³ Lady Frances was doubly related to James Erskine, Lord Grange - she was the daughter of John, his older brother; and in 1740 she married James, his son. The inventory of her estate includes (on pp. 13-20) a section listing 43 manuscript items that are either correspondence between James Erskine and the Wesley brothers or memorandums that Erskine prepared related to the Wesley brothers.

⁸W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (eds), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 20: *Journal and Diaries, III (1743-1754)* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), pp. 66-68; cf. Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, pp. 129-30.

⁹ See *A Collection of Letters on Religious Subjects, from various ministers and others, to the Rev. John Wesley* (London: Whitfield, 1797), pp. 37-40, 40-43.

¹⁰ An abridged transcription was included in Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, pp. 132-36. The original is in the collection of the Methodist Archive and Research Centre, The John Rylands University Library, Manchester, England, MA 1977/503, Box 4, file 19.

¹¹The letter is transcribed in Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, p. 147. The original is at Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections, David Laing collection, LA.II.125.

¹²Charles Wesley to James Erskine, 1 August 1745, Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections, David Laing collection, LA.II.25; Charles Wesley to James Erskine, 12 September 1746, The National Archives of Scotland, ref. GD124/15/1567. Both letters will appear in a volume of Charles Wesley's letters being published by Oxford University Press in 2013.

¹³The National Archives of Scotland, ref. GD 124/15/1642. Gareth Lloyd drew my attention to this inventory; I am indebted to the National Archives for providing a copy, from which I prepared this transcription.

Unfortunately, the National Archives holds only the original inventory list, not the items mentioned on the list. The items were apparently sold or given away, since two letters on the list were acquired by David Laing (1793–1878), an avid Scottish antiquary, who bequeathed them to Edinburgh University Library. These two letters are the only items on the list for which we know the current location and have access to the contents. However, the list includes a brief description of every item, often with short excerpts. Perusal of the inventory provides therefore further details on the relationship of Erskine and the Wesley brothers. It also leaves some tantalizing questions, like what John Wesley said concerning the status of blacks in his letter of 29 January 1746!

What follows is generally a transcription of the section of the inventory of Lady Frances Erskine's estate titled 'Letters of John and Charles Wesley, etc.' A few editorial revisions have been adopted. First, the original list adds honorific titles and frequently abbreviates both sender and receiver identifications; the transcription adopts a uniform style for listing each item, giving full names but no titles. Second, the original list places the date of the item at the end of the description, in the right hand column; the transcription moves it to the beginning, on the left. Third, while the items on the original list are placed in rough chronological sequence, a few are out of place; the transcription standardizes items in chronological order. Finally, for sake of completeness, the other items of correspondence between Erskine and the Wesley brothers noted above that do not appear in the original inventory are included in this list, placed in {styled brackets}, in their appropriate chronological location. Under the listing for each item in the original inventory the description of the contents of the item is quoted in full, with any editorial additions placed in [square brackets].

A List of the Erskine/Wesley Correspondence in Chronological Order

11 June 1744 Letter from Mrs. Anna Moll Millinor, Bedford St. [London], to James Erskine

‘on being denied the right of communion on Sabbath the 10th by Mr. Charles Wesley’. ‘Remark on back thereof by Mr. Erskine: “her spirit too bitter and unquiet, and seems not to see herself enough”’

[1744–45?] ‘Notes by Mr. Erskine with the view of drawing up a vindication of Mr. Charles Wesley’¹⁴

¹⁴This set of notes is undated, but is likely related to Erskine's help in defending Charles from accusations of inappropriate behaviour. See Kimborough Jr and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley*, vol. II, pp. 429, 434.

- 1745 Draft letter from James Erskine to Charles Wesley
- ‘on the disputed doctrines of particular and universal redemption
— subject treated in a clear and judicious manner’
- {10 Mar. 1745 the letter from James Erskine to John Wesley noted above}
- {16 Mar. 1745 the letter from John Wesley to James Erskine noted above}
- 1 Apr. 1745 Draft letter from James Erskine to John Wesley
- ‘relative to Mr. Edward’s treatise on redemption, and citing
instances of the natural tendency of sectarian and particular views
of religious subjects to bias the judgement, confirm men in error,
and produce schisms, etc. — examples Ralph and Ebenezer
Erskine in Scotland’ [cf. 3-4 Apr. letter noted above]¹⁵
- 12 Apr. 1745 Letter from John Wesley to James Erskine
- ‘dislike of passage contained in preface to Edwards’
*Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit*¹⁶
- {23 Apr. 1745 Memorandum of James Erskine for John and Charles Wesley
noted above}
- 28 June 1745 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
- ‘informing him of the success of the “Church Militant” and
informing him that brother [Thomas] Maxfield had been pressed
for a soldier’

¹⁵This is clearly a draft of the letter sent to John Wesley dated 3-4 April 1745, that is transcribed most fully in *A Collection of Letters on Religious Subjects*, 37-40. But that transcription does not contain the specific examples of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine. Either James Erskine omitted these from the final draft, or they were omitted by both Wesley in his extract in his *Journal* and the editors of *Collection* (1797).

¹⁶Jonathan Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (Boston, 1741; reprinted, London: Mason, 1742). It is unclear which passage Wesley found objectionable. He deleted the entire preface when he published an extract of Edwards’s book in 1744.

- 6 July 1745 Letter from John Wesley to James Erskine
‘relative to answering a passage in the *Craftsman*’¹⁷
- 1 Aug. 1745 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
‘meeting of “Conference” — salutation of the brethren’¹⁸
- 3 Aug. 1745 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
‘participating in satisfaction at return of the “poor prodigal” —
[update on Thomas] Maxfield — and enjoining him to “check”
J[ohn] Nelson on his everlasting egotism’
- 7 Aug. 1745 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
‘intimating Maxfield’s deliverance, application for Mr. Erskine’s
influence to obtain a special discharge in his favour so as he might
not be again pressed; reference to Mr. Erskine’s letter on “terms
of union” which he stated had been universally approved, etc’.¹⁹
- {4 Sept. 1745 Letter from James Erskine to John Wesley noted above}
- 17 Jan. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
‘Gospel flourishing at Bristol and neighbourhood’

¹⁷This is the letter obtained by David Laing, now in Edinburgh University Library; transcribed in Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, p. 147.

¹⁸This is the other letter obtained by David Laing, now in Edinburgh University Library. Charles was writing from Bristol, on the opening day of the second annual Conference of preachers associated with the Wesley brothers. The body of the letter reads: ‘Many here salute you in the love of Jesus Christ, particularly the brethren met in Conference; who are much disappointed by your not coming. We should be glad if you would favour us with any questions which you shall think necessary to be considered. Our Lord is with us. O that he may continue with us till He has made us meet for our inheritance above! Remember us in all your prayers that we may be led into all truth and holiness. I pray God for Christ sake give you the fullness of his Spirit, that you *may know* the things which are freely given you of God!’

¹⁹The minutes of the Conference that had just concluded in Bristol contain no explicit mention of the “terms of union” or their approval. Henry D. Rack, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10: *The Methodist Societies. The Minutes of Conference* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011), pp. 147–68.

- 29 Jan. 1746 Letter from John Wesley to James Erskine
 ‘negro, whether “skin constitute a sort of animal specifically different from man”’.
- 29 Jan. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
 ‘proposed journey north whence he had received heavy tidings’²⁰
- 2 Mar. 1746 Letter from John Wesley to James Erskine
 ‘Mr. Erskine’s trials, of personal application, etc.’
- 16 Mar. 1746 Letter from John Wesley to James Erskine
 ‘stating that there are cases in which good may result by giving way, but that the one alluded to was not of that nature (there follows a very sensible remark)’
- 20 May 1746 Letter from John Wesley to James Erskine
 ‘on his experience and feelings’
- 14 June 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
 ‘success of his labours on the Isle of Portland’²¹
- 25 June 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

²⁰The heavy tidings likely related to the attempted invasion underway from Scotland by Charles Edward Stuart (grandson of James II) hoping to retake the English throne. The threat was quashed in the Battle of Culloden in April 1746.

²¹ Kimborough Jr and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley*, vol. II, p. 461.

'giving satisfactory account of his visit to Tavistock, constrained to go to Plymouth, preaches in the streets, fields, etc. to the conversion of many from the doctrine of antinomianism, etc.'²²

2 July 1746

Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'remarks on that "show of humility talking of oneself" and informing that he has preached last Sunday to nearly 8000 souls, etc.'²³

7 July 1746

Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'informing him that "the word runs very swiftly" and soliciting his prayers'

7 July 1746

Letter from James Erskine to Charles Wesley

'wherein he discusses at great length the doctrines of particular and universal redemption'

12 July 1746

Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'success of his ministry'

12 July 1746

Draft letter from James Erskine to Charles Wesley

'on the primary nature and notion of *being* — creator and creature; and of the independency and dependency necessarily thence resulting; with reference to the doctrine of particular and universal redemption. Explication of the term "predestination", etc'.

20 July 1746

Letter from John Wesley to James Erskine

²² *ibid.*, pp. 462-3.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 464. Wesley lists the congregation gathered on Sunday, June 29 as numbering only 5,000!

'stating that he felt convinced that Mr. Erskine's soul could not be saved till he had broke through "for what is this yielding, but giving place to the devil, and, in effect, giving up the children of God"'.²⁴

- 12-28 July 1746 Draft letter from James Erskine to Charles Wesley
- 'on practical Christianity, as independent of the disputed doctrines of particular and universal redemption'.
- 1746 Draft letter from James Erskine to Charles Wesley
- 'on the same topics (unfinished)'.
- 12 July 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
- 'on the same subject and showing that the doctrine which he espouses and propagates, namely, general predestination, is the superior; that final perseverance most dangerous to young beginners etc. (very interesting letter)'.
- 4 Aug. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
- 'Route for the month, preached to above 10,000 souls previous evening at Gwennap'²⁴
- 9 Aug. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine
- 'success of ministration at St. Just, where, he states, "the leopards are all laid down with the kids"'²⁵
- 22 Aug. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

²⁴ Kimborough Jr and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley*, vol. II, p. 471. Wesley again lists the crowd at Gwennap on the evening of August 3 as numbering only about 5,000.

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 466-70. The quotation is Isaiah 11: 6.

‘Reception at North Tresmeer; “disorderly walker” at Tavistock; inexpediency of preaching final perseverance to beginners — apt to “catch at the opinion before they are settled and grounded in grace”, etc; remarks on personal affections — account of parting at Gwennap, 12,000 present, etc’.²⁶

{12 Sept. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine noted above}²⁷

14 Oct. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

‘recommending a Kingswood collier as a faithful and skillful man to advise with in his “worldly affairs” — reference to divisions in Scotland. His own flock “delivered from disputes”; and as to self and brother observes “as we *never had the thought of seceding or setting up for ourselves*, God who knoweth our simpleness and single eye, will, we humbly trust, preserve us from those snares in which so many mightier have fallen” — possible to keep clear of controversy in preaching, even to Papists’.

28 Oct. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

‘glorious accounts of the progress of Cornwall; although *Satan rages above measure*’

2 Dec. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

“Grace given in Scotland, England, and Wales, or America hitherto, but as a few scattering drops before the shower”; sympathy in tribulation; Mr. Wesley’s old High Church prejudice, desires to see the divine right of Episcopacy disproved “if it *can be disproved*” — and that it is not *essential* to a church. Requests

²⁶ Kimborough Jr and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, vol. II*, p. 471. Wesley lists his parting crowd at Gwennap on the evening of 10 August as numbering about 10,000. He reached Tresmeer by 12 August, and commented on the impact of the disorderly walker upon the society in Tavistock on 13 August and 20 August.

²⁷ This is the letter held in The National Archives of Scotland. It is only two sentences long, arranging a meeting the next day.

Mr. Erskine's opinion and refers to Papins (?²⁸) a writer on the subject'.

16 Dec. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'F. F.'s²⁹ vanity; his work not calculated to make proselytes. Travelling plan for the month'.

24 Dec. 1746 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'remarks on private afflictions and Christian patience and fortitude; and on a question relative to the text Matt 5:16 which Mr. Erskine had submitted to him — Divine right of Episcopacy, scruples not altogether removed by Mr. Erskine's opinion, etc. — Two more clergymen, a D.D. and his curate, "stirred up to thirst after the Lord and salvation of souls",³⁰ accident at Hexham'.³¹

10 Jan. 1747 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'acknowledges that through Mr. Erskine's letter both he and his brother's scruples are so far removed that they could freely hold communion with sincere dissenters of any denomination'.

17 Jan. 1747 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'informing him that "a great door is opened at Leeds" etc., etc'.

21 Jan. 1747 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

²⁸The spelling in the summary is fairly clear, but does not seem to fit any known work. Perhaps Wesley was referring to *The Divine Right of Episcopacy Asserted* (London: Richard Sare, 1708). The author is identified only as a Presbyterian of the Church of England.

²⁹Almost certainly Felix Farley; cf. letter of 15 December 1753.

³⁰Wesley comments that on 14 December 1746, he 'had two or three hours' close conversation with the two ministers at Whickham'. Kimborough Jr and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, vol. II*, p. 484.

³¹Wesley mentions preaching here on 18 December, and an attempt to disrupt him with a cock-fight. Kimborough Jr. and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, vol. II*, p. 484.

'mode of address (classical) "word grows mightily and prevails" at Leeds'.

29-31 Jan. 1747 Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'commenced at Taddington, with interesting account of ministerial labours there and finished at Sheffield, at which latter town he states he "*evaded the cross* last night by preaching three hours earlier than the time appointed, but ashamed of his fear"³² — Mr. Erskine's affections and dream "*fratrem ne desere frater*"'.³³

30 May [1747 ?³⁴] Letter from Rev. Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'reminding him of intended "Conference" and requesting his queries'.

[?³⁵ June 1747] Draft letter from James Erskine to [Charles Wesley?]

'containing suggestions as to regulation of discussions at Conference, and cautioning against allowing the adoption of different, or particular explications, or phrases, expressions of the same fundamental truths to interrupt or destroy the harmony of the Society'

Jan. 1749 'Some observations on a sermon preached by Mr. John Wesley in the chapel in West Street near the Seven Dials, London on Jan. 1, 1749, by Mr. Erskine, written soon after the sermon was preached'

³² Taddington, Berkshire, was one of the 'several places in or near the Peak' where Wesley was active between 25-30 January 1747. He records that there were rioters in Sheffield on January 30, but not how he evaded them. Kimborough Jr and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley*, vol. II, p. 488.

³³ 'Let not brother forsake brother' (Loeb). Virgil, *Aenid*, Book 10, line 600.

³⁴ The year is not specified in the inventory. 1745 is not likely because Conference was in October and is addressed in other letters. 1746 is ruled out because Conference was held that year 12-15 May. The most likely is 1747, when Conference met in London on 15-18 June. Also possible is 1748, meeting in London on 2-6 June, but that would have left little time for Erskine to respond.

³⁵ The draft is undated, but is almost surely a response to the preceding letter. The guidelines suggested fit well the topics discussed at the 1747 Conference. Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, pp. 188-209.

15 Dec 1753

Letter from Charles Wesley to James Erskine

'regretting interruption of correspondence; death of Felix Farley; sickness of partner [i.e., his wife Sarah]; etc'.

RANDY L. MADDOX

JOHN WESLEY HEAD SASH WINDOW STOP

On the front cover of this issue is a rare finger and thumb pressed moulded head of John Wesley. The back of the head is cut away to form a shelf with a vertical back. The flesh hand coloured head is mounted on four black legs. The measurements are: overall height $4\frac{7}{8}$ inches 124 mm; height to the shelf $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches 68 mm; width $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches 88mm and front to back $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches 88 mm. The head is finely moulded showing the features of John Wesley at the age of 78.¹ Veins on Wesley's forehead and temples are clearly shown in relief. Later productions of this window stop c.1840 do not have the same fine detail.

limited production c.1795

Occasionally this object has been described as a furniture rest. It is not because the legs would not carry the weight of furniture. The aesthetically pleasing sash window with its larger panes of glass began to replace the draughty, small leaded, paned glass metal hinged casement windows in the houses of the wealthy. Early examples of sash windows are at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire (c.1668-80), Hampton Court and other royal residences. Christopher Wren's use of sash windows made them a fashion statement which the aristocracy and wealthy soon began to imitate. The earliest sash windows had a permanently fixed upper section with a vertical sliding opening lower window. At first the lower window was not corded with a counter weight allowing the window to be held open. So, to allow ventilation into the room, the lower section had to be wedged open. It was only the wealthy who could afford to replace casement windows with the new sash window. The trend to fit sash windows in ordinary houses came much later. The early Enoch Wood John Wesley sash window stop would have been made mainly for more wealthy Methodist members living in homes with sash windows. The later model would probably have been bought by the Methodist faithful as an ornament.

DONALD H. RYAN

¹ Frank Faulkner, *The Wood Family of Burslem* (Wakefield: EP Publishing, 1972), p. 49

**WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING
at EPWORTH MEMORIAL CHURCH
SATURDAY, 29 JUNE 2013**

The Wesley Historical Society returns to its roots in 2013 to celebrate the 120th anniversary of its foundation in 1893 with a full programme of activities at Epworth, the childhood home of John and Charles Wesley. Members and friends are invited to visit Epworth for the whole day on Saturday 29 June 2013, including the Annual Lecture by the Revd Margaret Jones, and to re-visit Epworth to join the congregation of Epworth Memorial Church for a service of thanksgiving on Sunday 30 June at 10.45 a.m. We are grateful to the Revd David Leese, Minister of Wesley Memorial Church, for extending this invitation to us, advising on overnight accommodation and offering a stimulating programme which will include:

- Assemble at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, High Street, Epworth DN9 1EP. Car parking is available behind the church.
- Coffee and tea available from 10.00-10.30
- View exhibition at the Church
- Welcome and introduction 10.30
- Choice of guided Heritage Walk incorporating St Andrews, Wesley and Kilham sites or Rectory Tour [Cost £5]: both pre-booked on 01427 872268.
 - 12.00 Two-course lunch at Wesley Memorial Church priced £5.50 (pre-booked on 01427 872319 (local facilities are limited).
 - Wesley Historical Society Annual General Meeting 12.45 in the Memorial Church.
 - 2.30 Annual lecture in the Memorial Church: Revd Margaret Jones: Grand-daughters to Susanna: women's discipleship in Wesleyan Methodism 1800-1850'.
 - Optional event for those staying locally, and who did not take the Old Rectory tour in the morning: 5.00pm Tour of the Old Rectory with costumed guides (needs to be pre-booked)
 - Opportunity to join with the congregation of Wesley Memorial Church at 10.45 a.m. on Sunday 30 June for service of thanksgiving marking the 120th anniversary of the WHS with Revd Dr Martin Wellings as preacher.
 - Overnight accommodation options: Wesley Guest House, 16 Queen Street, Epworth (01427 874512) www.wesleyguesthouse.com; Newlands Holiday Cottages 0798 9076736 www.newlandsholidaybreaks.co.uk; Scunthorpe Travelodge 01724 282364; Scunthorpe Premier Inn 0871 527 896.
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Wesley Historical Society Annual Lecture, Wesley Memorial Church, Epworth,
30 June 2013.

**'Grand-daughters to Susanna: Women's discipleship in Wesleyan Methodism,
1800-1850'**

Revd Margaret Jones:

The lecture will delineate some of the ways in which women, within Wesleyan Methodism in particular, responded to their calling in the context of the first half of the nineteenth century. The study is deeply indebted to Linda Wilson's comprehensive analysis of Evangelical women's spirituality in this period. Wilson has demonstrated the ways in which women were 'constrained' by social expectations while living out their 'zeal' for Christ, concluding that ultimately, within complex relationships of religious, social and cultural factors, it was that religious zeal which 'constrained' them to act as they did.

The study period of 1800-1850 may be characterised (or caricatured) as a time when Wesleyan women were relatively inactive in expressing their faith in public spheres. It is framed by dates which are significant in today's historical narratives. The Conference ruling of 1803 severely limited, though it did not silence, the now well-known 'women preachers' of early Methodism. The setting up in 1858 of 'The Ladies' Committee for the Amelioration of the Condition of Women in Heathen Countries, and for Education etc.' marked women's first institutional involvement in Wesleyan Methodism at connexional level. Wesleyan Methodism, with its limitation on women's preaching, is seen as more repressive to women than either the Primitive Methodist or the Bible Christian Connexions. While not offering a major challenge to these interpretations, this paper sets out to nuance them. It draws on evidence from officially sanctioned publications, in particular from obituaries, as well as unpublished and local sources, aiming to take account of the factors which shaped the women's stories as well as the stories themselves. The word 'discipleship' has been chosen in preference to 'spirituality', in part to indicate continuity of theological themes within the life of a denomination, but also to reflect the paper's focus on the active expression of faith.

Biography: The lecturer read history at Somerville College, Oxford, and taught the subject in secondary schools while raising a family and engaging in church work. While training for ministry at Wesley House, Cambridge she completed an MPhil in Theology. Her dissertation topic, 'Women in the Arminian/Methodist Magazine, 1778-1821', led to published articles in the *Epworth Review*, vol. 20, no. 2 (May, 1993) and 'Women's Voices in the Arminian/Methodist Magazine, 1778-1821', *Gender and Religion*, Studies in Church History, 34 (1998). Other published articles and chapters include a chapter on 'Growing in Grace and Holiness', in *Unmasking Methodist Theology* (2004). She spent twelve years in circuit ministry, combining it with part-time tutoring in theological education, and served in the Connexional Team

from 2004 to 2008 as Team Leader of the Formation in Ministry Office and Secretary for Presbyteral Ministry. Since retiring in 2009 she has once again found time to engage in historical research.

For further information please contact General Secretary, Dr John A. Hargreaves: tel. 01422 250780; e-mail johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk.

JOHN A. HARGREAVES

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT 2012

We entered 2012 with a strengthened team of officers including a new President Emeritus, new President and a new Publications Editor, all of whom have contributed to the maintenance of the society's reputation and influence, though mention must be made of the continuing indisposition of the RHS Liaison Officer, Professor Michael Collins who has been seriously ill since taking up office, but continues to follow the Society's affairs with interest. Moreover, the society still lacks officers with ICT expertise to shadow John and Steven Vickers in their roles as Editor and System manager of the electronic *Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* and the Revd Donald Ryan who has indicated that he wishes to relinquish the post of webmaster, though thankfully he intends to continue fulfilling his other roles which are of inestimable value to the society. Like John and Steven he has also shown a willingness to continue in his role as webmaster until suitable replacements are found. Any suggested solutions, which anyone is able to offer, will be gratefully considered by the Executive.

In other areas, the Society has made considerable progress. The Society now has regular meetings of its Editorial Board, which has assumed responsibility for advising on both the publication of the *PWHS* and also the society's occasional publications. I want therefore to pay tribute to the careful consideration given by the joint editors of *PWHS*, the publications editor, the editor of the annual bibliography and members of the Editorial Board to developing the society's publishing programme, which is instrumental in the realisation of the Society's objectives. The fruits of their labours should be apparent in future issues of the *PWHS* which now has a stock of articles awaiting publication and in the forthcoming publication of Dr E.D. Graham's directory of Methodist deaconesses. Further offers of articles for the *PWHS* and the society's occasional publications are also welcomed. A major project to provide a digitised online version of the *PWHS* up to and including volume 55 with the assistance of Rob Bradshaw has already come to fruition, with an immediate surge of interest as evidenced by the thousands of visitors to the site, which, as Michael Collins has observed, provides a valuable research tool to 'those not within easy reach of major academic libraries'. It also complements the *DMBI*, which continues to grow

under the leadership of its founder editor, Dr John Vickers who, with Vivienne, we are delighted to note has recently celebrated his Diamond Wedding Anniversary. Dr Clive Field is also exploring ways of bringing the unique bibliographical resources he has pioneered over the years online ensuring that the WHS will continue to have a major impact on the study of Methodist history both within and increasingly beyond its membership constituency.

The well-attended lecture at the New Room in Bristol in 2012 chaired by Dr Gary Best and with the Director of Music, Mr Philip Carter, accompanying the worship on the chapel's historic Snetzler organ, provided a stimulating comparative analysis by Dr John Wolffe, Professor of Religious History at the Open University of patterns of growth and decline in Anglicanism and Methodism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A full supporting programme also included guided tours of the New Room and of Charles Wesley's House with Rachel Newton in period costume. Future annual lectures are now planned until 2016 with full supporting programmes and inspiring locations, notably next year at Epworth, where the lecturer will be the Revd Margaret Jones and her subject 'Grand-daughters to Susanna: Women's discipleship in Wesleyan Methodism, 1800-1850'. The minister at the Wesley Memorial Church, who is one of our members, the Revd David Leese, has helped us to offer a very full and interesting supporting programme with the option of remaining in Epworth overnight to take part in a service of thanksgiving on the Sunday morning at 10.45 a.m., with the Revd Dr Martin Wellings, former President of the WMHS as guest preacher to mark the WHS's 120th anniversary.

The Society is also encouraging members to take part in the weekend of celebrations to mark the bicentenary of the Methodist Missionary Society in Leeds in early October 2013. In 2014 the WHS Annual Lecture will form the concluding event of the Wesley Historical Society Residential Conference on Saturday 28 June. The Revd David Hart, now re-designated Conference Secretary, is already planning a residential conference at the High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire for 26-28 June addressing the theme of Methodism and Conflict, appropriate in the year which marks the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. As regional Vice-President of the World Methodist Historical Society I have been invited to a conference at Reutlingen University in October this year to explore ways of strengthening European wide interest in Methodism as we approach the centenary of this watershed in European history and the quarter-centenary in 2017 of the European Protestant Reformation. Finally, a very constructive meeting was held at Oxford Brooke's University earlier this year to ensure that the future of the Society's Library is strengthened as the faculties based at the Harcourt Hill Campus experience structural change and plans for re-development of the campus are considered.

In conclusion I would like to reiterate our need to continue to recruit new members both within and beyond the Methodist constituency. Excellent publicity materials are available for distribution in churches, at Methodist heritage sites and in libraries, educational and archive centres. Electronic information about future Annual Meetings is available for inclusion in Regional Historical Society publications or even church

and circuit newsletters and magazines on application to the General Secretary. We are delighted that members of Wesley Historical Society Wales, who included details of this year's Annual Meeting in their own inaugural bulletin crossed the Severn Bridge to attend the Annual Meeting in Bristol and that members of the Wesley Historical Society Yorkshire plan to travel to Epworth for their summer meeting in 2013 to join with the Wesley Historical Society in the celebration of its double-diamond jubilee.

DR JOHN A. HARGREAVES

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONSTITUTION OF THE WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Adopted at the Wesley Historical Society Annual General Meeting
held at John Wesley's Chapel, The New Room, Bristol BS1 3JE on 30th June 2012 .**

1. PREAMBLE

The Wesley Historical Society was founded in 1893 in order to promote the study of the history and literature of early Methodism. Over the years the range of its interests has been enlarged to include the history of all the sections of the Methodist Church which were united in 1932, other Wesleyan and Methodist Connexions and United Churches which include former Wesleyan or Methodist denominations. In the pursuit of these interests it has published its *Proceedings* periodically, since 1959 has administered a reference library , from 2008 has hosted and from 2010 maintained *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*.

2. OBJECTS

The advancement of the education of the public in connection with the history of Methodism (which history is hereinafter referred to as the Special Subject). In furtherance of this object but not further or otherwise the Society shall have the following powers:

- (a) To provide and preserve books, manuscripts, other documents in any medium and artefacts relating to the Special Subject or some aspect thereof and to provide facilities for the study or display of the same.
- (b) To promote conferences, public lectures or pilgrimages and an Annual Lecture given by an acknowledged authority on some aspect of the Special Subject.
- (c) To publish the *Proceedings* of the Society three times a year or at such other intervals as the Executive Committee may determine and occasional Publications on the Special Subject.
- (d) To raise, invite and receive contributions from any body, person or persons whatsoever by way of subscription, donation, grant or otherwise, providing that the Society shall not undertake any permanent trading activity in raising funds for its purposes.
- (e) To encourage, support and advise Regional Methodist historical societies and those wishing to form one; to keep in touch with them, report their activities and

list their Secretaries in the *Proceedings* and on the Society's Website through the "Regional Methodist Historical Societies Liaison Officer", providing that the Wesley Historical Society shall not assume or have any financial or other responsibility for these societies.

- (f) To maintain a Website to promote the interests, activities and publications of the Society and the Regional Methodist Historical Societies.
- (g) To maintain the on-line version of *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*.

3. LIBRARY

By a Sharing Agreement dated the 28th Day of July 1992 and in July 2007 a 'Legal Agreement' with the Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd and Oxford Brookes University, the Society's Library is currently housed at The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford and is available, subject to the Library rules of the Society and of Oxford Brookes University for study by members of the Society, the staff and students of the University, as well as by such members of the public as may be approved by the Society's Librarian.

4. GIFTS

The Society may accept, at its discretion, whether by way of gift or bequest such books, manuscripts, other documents in any medium, portraits, pictures, ceramics, artefacts or articles as shall appear to the General Secretary, the Administrator and the Librarian to relate to the Special Subject or some aspect thereof.

5. A DICTIONARY OF METHODISM IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

In 2000 *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, edited by John A. Vickers, was published by the Epworth Press. Since then John A. Vickers has continued to edit an Electronic version of the Dictionary. The Electronic version of the Dictionary includes the revised version of the printed edition plus extensive new and updated entries. From 2010 the Society has accepted the responsibility for maintaining, revising, and adding new entries to the Dictionary. A copy of a letter from the Methodist Publishing House giving John A. Vickers permission to use the material in the printed version of the Dictionary in the electronic version is in the archive of the Society. So that the Dictionary can be maintained and developed the Society shall appoint an editor and a system manager. If the Society decides to discontinue maintaining the Electronic Dictionary the Society will use its best efforts to find another organisation or person that will be willing to take over the responsibility. In the first instance the Methodist Archives and Research Centre at the University of Manchester John Rylands Library shall be given the opportunity of taking over the responsibility for the continuing development of the Dictionary.

6. MEMBERSHIP

Any person or body may be admitted to membership of the Society, without previous nomination, upon making such subscribing in respect of annual, or periodical, membership as shall have been determined by the Annual General Meeting, notice whereof shall have been published in the *Proceedings*. Where two people sharing the same address wish to be members one may be an associate member at a reduced subscription rate. An associate member shall not receive a separate copy of the *Proceedings* but in all other respects have the rights of a member including the right to vote at the Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting

7. PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

All members other than associate members are entitled to one free copy of the *Proceedings* of the Society as issued, and may purchase extra copies and back numbers, if available, at reduced rates. Subject to editorial approval any member may insert historical notes or queries in the *Proceedings*, and these entries shall be made without charge. All members are entitled to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Society and any lecture, conference, event or pilgrimage organized by the Society.

8. OFFICERS

The Society shall be served by honorary Officers appointed at each Annual General Meeting, the Annual General Meeting having power to appoint from time to time such of the following as it shall deem desirable

President,
President Emeritus,
General Secretary,
Registrar,
Administrator,
Treasurer,
Proceedings Editors
Bibliography Editor
Publications Editor
Librarian,
Assistant Librarian
Regional Methodist Historical Societies Liaison Officer
Marketing Officer,
Conferences Secretary,
Distribution Manager
Webmaster
Editor - Electronic *Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*
System manager – Electronic *Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*

Members of the Society may submit nominations for the election of officers to the Society by giving notice in writing to the General Secretary at least fourteen clear days before the Annual General Meeting

9. INDEPENDENT EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS

The Society shall appoint at each Annual General Meeting an Independent Examiner of Accounts

10. ELECTED MEMBER

There shall be an 'Elected Member' for the purposes of section 12 below, elected by the Annual General Meeting to serve for a period not exceeding three years and not immediately re-electable. Members of the Society may submit nominations for the election of the 'Elected Member' by giving notice in writing to the General Secretary at least fourteen clear days before the Annual General Meeting.

11. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

An Annual General Meeting open to all members of the Society shall be held at a time and place agreed by the Executive Committee. At least three months notice of the Annual General Meeting shall be published in the *Proceedings* or sent by post to every member at his/her or their last recorded address.

12. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee shall meet annually prior to the Annual General Meeting and at other times as deemed necessary. The constitution of the Executive Committee shall be the Officers appointed under section 8 above, with the exception of the President Emeritus, together with the Elected Member and the World Methodist Historical Society (British Section) Secretary, if a member of the Wesley Historical Society.

13. SUB COMMITTEES

The following sub-committees shall be constituted and meet as required: Library Committee, Editorial Board. The Library Committee shall consist of the Librarian, General Secretary, Assistant Librarian, Treasurer and any other person(s) appointed by the Executive Committee. The Editorial Board who shall oversee all WHS Publications shall consist of the *Proceedings* Editors, Bibliography Editor, Publications Editor, the General Secretary, the Administrator, the Treasurer, the President and any other person(s) appointed by the Executive Committee. The Annual General Meeting may appoint other sub-committees as necessary

14. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

A Special General Meeting may be convened by decision of the Annual General Meeting or the Executive Committee to expedite the business of the Society. The Special General Meeting shall have the same powers as the Annual General Meeting. At least fourteen days notice must be published in the *Proceedings* or sent by post to every member at his/her or their last recorded address.

15. QUORUM

Ten members shall be a quorum at an Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting.

16. CONSTITUTION

The Constitution may (subject as hereinafter provided) be amended by a two-thirds majority of the members present at an Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting provided that fourteen days notice of the amendments intended to be proposed shall have been published in

the *Proceedings* or sent by post to every member at his/her or their last recorded address and further provided that nothing herein contained shall authorise any amendment which might cause the Society to cease to be a charity at law.

17. DISSOLUTION OF THE SOCIETY

In the event of the dissolution of the Society the Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd shall be offered the ownership with the responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the Library. Any assets remaining after satisfaction of all the Society's debts and liabilities shall be used to endow the Library. Should the Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd not wish to receive the Library and the endowment, the Society shall, upon recommendation by the Executive Committee, resolve in Special General Meeting to dispose of the Library and the Society's assets to such charitable or educational body registered in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as will be best able to fulfil the Object of the Society.
Donald H. Ryan, Wesley Historical Society Administrator 30 June 2012

NOTE

The Wesley Historical Society Constitution has been revised to reflect the continuing development of the Society. Changes have been made to the titles and roles of some of the officers. The major change relates to the creation of an Editorial Board who will oversee all editorial policy of the *PWHS* and all publications produced by the Society.

Donald H. Ryan, WHS Administrator

BOOK REVIEWS

Henry D. Rack (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley, vol. 10: The Methodist Societies: The Minutes of Conference* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011, pp. xxiii + 1046, hb. £38.99. ISBN 978-1-4267-1190-9).

The Wesley Works Editorial Project was launched more than half a century ago, when a group of Wesley scholars, including Albert Outler, Franz Hildebrandt and Robert Cushman, met to plan a new critical edition of John Wesley's printed works. This initiative reflected the reappraisal of Wesley's historical, theological and ecumenical significance, associated particularly with Outler's pioneering scholarship, and the lifespan of the project has coincided with a burgeoning of Wesley studies in the United States and elsewhere. An enthusiasm for Wesley and all things apparently 'Wesleyan' in some quarters, and an alarming neglect of our tradition in others, makes sound historical scholarship especially important in these days, and the Wesley Works Project has a vital contribution to make to the life and health of World Methodism. Due partly to changes in publisher and editorial personnel and partly to the sheer scale of the enterprise, the publication schedule has been stately rather than rapid. Since that initial gathering in 1960, John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr, have been assassinated, astronauts have set foot on the moon, the Berlin Wall has fallen and the world wide web has been created, but still the completion of the Project seems a rather distant prospect. The present volume, the sixteenth to appear, focussing on the Methodist Conference, complements *The Methodist Societies. History, Nature and Design*, edited by Rupert Davies and published as long ago as 1989. This companion volume is warmly to be welcomed, additionally so because the project's editors entrusted this important text to the meticulous and wide-ranging scholarship of Henry Rack.

Before reaching the Wesley texts, the reader is treated to a substantial introductory essay by Dr Rack. This reviews the origins of the Conference, discussing (and dismissing) possible models in other religious traditions, and considers attendance, agenda, structure (location and frequency), debate and voting, the place of the preachers, the origins and impact of the 1784 Deed of Declaration, and the evolution of the *Minutes*. This account reveals a gradual and untidy development from an informal gathering of invited participants – clergy, lay preachers, Band leaders and even 'pious and judicious strangers' in 1744 to a much larger and more formal assembly by the 1780s, with printed and confidential records and with a well-established agenda. Doctrinal discussion, a significant element of the early Conferences, diminished after the 1740s (although the impact of the 1770 *Minutes* in re-igniting controversy with Calvinist evangelicals should not be overlooked), and concern was expressed that too much time was being spent on temporal concerns (Connexional collections, debts, contingencies, and the arrangements to care for the wives and families of the preachers). Much attention is given to Wesley's relationship with the Conference: to his exercise of authority, to resistance by the preachers, and to the extent of Wesley's control of the Connexion in his later years. It is acknowledged

that the *Minutes*, never a verbatim account of proceedings, do not furnish sufficient evidence to determine these matters. Dr Rack concludes with a helpful reminder that the Conference records present only one perspective on Wesley's Methodism, foregrounding its organisation, its rules, and its attachment to the Church of England, while offering little evidence of the charismatic, emotional and supernatural side of the movement, or of the fissiparous tendencies which emerged in schisms and secessions, during Wesley's lifetime and after his death.

Dr Rack presents four sets of texts in this volume. First come the manuscript minutes of the early Conferences (1744-64), with an introduction by the late Frank Baker discussing textual variations, the identity of copyists and Wesley's tendency to select and edit what he chose to publish. This section includes the famous opening to the agenda of 1744: 'What do we meet for? To consider before God: 1. What to teach. 2. How to teach. 3. What to do? i.e., doctrine, discipline, and practice' (p. 120). From the first, the question and answer format of Conference proceedings may be seen, a form which endured into the twentieth century. As well as noting textual variations, Dr Rack supplies explanatory comments, for instance on the books selected for the preachers' libraries at London, Bristol and Newcastle (pp. 161-68 – a daunting list) and the sometimes sparse accounts in the minutes are supplemented by quotations from Wesley's *Journal and Diaries* and from the papers of the preachers. Next come the printed annual *Minutes* (1765-83). Mention may be made here of the location of Methodism in relation to Dissent ('We are irregular . . . yet we are not Dissenters') (p. 325) and of the lengthy justification of Wesley's personal authority over the Methodist societies. The insistence that 'I sent for [the members of Conference] to *advise*, not *govern* me' (p. 329) is a recurring theme. The third section of the edition covers the period from 1784 to 1791, when the printed *Minutes*, recording statistics, the stations of the preachers and major decisions bearing on the life of the Connexion, were supplemented by the confidential manuscript journal of the Conference. Footnotes offer the preachers' impressions of Wesley at the 1790 Conference. To Joseph Sutcliffe, Wesley 'looked fresh and lively', but John Pawson thought him 'now nearly worn out, and his faculties evidently much impaired.' (p. 708). Finally, Dr Rack brings together doctrinal and disciplinary *Minutes*, including the various editions of the so-called 'Large' *Minutes*, the summary of Methodist policy and polity, legislation and guidance, handed to preachers admitted into full connexion with the Conference. These four sections of carefully edited texts comprise the bulk of this substantial volume – some 800 of the 1050 pages. Appendices supply the 1784 Deed of Declaration and the *Minutes* of the Irish Conference from 1778-1790. There is a General Index and an Index of Scriptural References.

Those with an eye to detail may find some proof-reading slips in this vast volume, and there is an element of repetition in the introduction (for instance, on the stationing of the preachers). It would, however, be mean-spirited indeed to allow any minor cavils or quibbles to detract from a major scholarly achievement, demonstrating immense labour, wide reading and a deep acquaintance with early Methodism. Aficionados of the Methodist Conference will dip into this volume for insight,

edification and amusement. Serious students of Methodist polity will find their understanding enriched by attention to the historical evolution of a characteristic Connexional institution. All those who are interested in the development of Methodism in the eighteenth century will find much to ponder here. This is a text which Methodist ecclesiologists and historians of Methodism cannot afford to be without, and the scholarly community owes Henry Rack a huge debt of gratitude for this gift. It is devoutly to be hoped that the remaining volumes in the Wesley Works Project will soon follow.

MARTIN WELLINGS

Religion, Gender and Industry: Exploring Church and Methodism in a Local Setting, edited by Geordan Hammond and Peter S. Forsaith (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011, pp. xix + 238. Paperback, £18.00. ISBN 13: 978-1-60899-642-1).

This volume is the fruit of a conference on the Methodist John Fletcher of Madeley and his context held on location in Shropshire during the summer of 2009. Fletcher ministered as the Anglican incumbent of the parish of Madeley between 1760 and 1785, a time when the parish was also at the heart of the industrial revolution due to Abraham Darby's discovery of a means to smelt iron ore at Coalbrookdale. The third theme that informs this volume is gender; following Fletcher's death the parish was dominated by his widow, Mary and her protégé Mary Tooth for over sixty years; their activities are used as a means by which contributors explore aspects of women's participation in the Methodist movement at the end of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth. This is therefore an intricately conceived volume of essays, attempting to cover three big themes which in many ways could easily support a volume each. In what is perhaps a grand claim, Bruce Hindmarsh, who contributes a 'Foreword', suggests that the essays are a 'Breughel like picture of life in Madeley' (p. viii).

After an introductory essay, Jeremy Gregory examines recent historiographical trends on the three themes that constitute the volume. However, the bulk of the essays focus around two of the three themes, Methodism and gender. As with any collection of essays, despite the best attempts of the editors, not every reader will find every essay equally appealing. While issues relating to industrialisation certainly do figure in some of the essays, the only one that addresses them directly is Barrie Trinder's examination of the lives of the parishioners who made up John Fletcher's sphere of influence. Arguing that to 'understand the pastor we must try to understand his flock' (p. 37), Trinder patiently unravels the various jobs done by men and women in the parish, often unhelpfully glossed over by their depiction simply as miners or colliers. William Gibson writes insightfully about Fletcher's bishop, Lord James Beauclerk of Hereford, who unlike contemporary perceptions was actually a committed and reformist High Churchman keen to encourage his clergy to discharge their duties as diligently as possible. He had little problem with Methodism if it assisted such a

purpose. Gibson's essay contributes another small piece to our growing appreciation of the quality of many eighteenth century bishops.

Having a slightly more tangential relationship to Fletcher and Madeley, Eryn White writes about the religious community established by the Welsh revivalist Howel Harris at Trefeca. White's focus is on the women who lived in the family and the work in which they were involved; at times the essay leaves the reader wondering about the spiritual life of the community and the extent to which Harris adopted a semi-monastic pattern in that aspect of its life also. The remainder of the volume examines Madeley after Fletcher's death, and looks in a little more detail at Fletcher's influence. Mary Tooth's ministry is explored in depth in an essay by Carol Blessing, while John Fletcher's influence on Pheobe Palmer, the later nineteenth century holiness teacher, is explored by Harold Raser. The collection is rounded off by a slightly more personal piece by Peter Forsaith who has spent much of the past thirty years working on Fletcher. His essay reflects on some of the main historiographical trends within the study of Fletcher's, drawing extensively in the second half on some of Fletcher's correspondence which Forsaith has recently edited and published.

So this is certainly a stimulating collection of essays; at times it doesn't quite work as a localised study of the three themes that it sets out to examine, but most readers of the *Proceedings* will certainly find much of value and interest in this volume.

DAVID CERI JONES

Ronnie Aitchison, *A history of Normanton Methodist Circuit* (Normanton: Furness and Aitchison, 2012, pp. ii +133. Paperback, price not stated).

This self-published book is the result of both painstaking research on a small segment of the West Yorkshire archive and what is suggested by the author as the use of oral history.

This book provides a catalogue of the activities of committees and congregations, as well as lay and ordained leaders, as the various strands of Methodism arrived or emerged, developed and then declined in this West Yorkshire area. It charts both the rise and fall of individual chapels as well as the complexities of circuit organisation and re-organisation in the period from 1842 until 2011. The book does not provide very much information by way of contextualising the narrative nor of offering explanations of the organisational structures it describes, which means that for those not conversant either with Methodist terminology or the constituent components of Methodism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the text is hard going. The author has chosen not to footnote any of the sources used, although the text does give some general hints as from where the primary material was drawn.

This book provides a helpful addition to the developing canon of Methodist local histories and it makes a useful contribution to understanding something of both the

complexity of Methodism in the period and the way that these Methodists did, or it seems mainly did not, interact.

DAVID HART

Richard Turnbull, *Reviving the Heart: The Story of the 18th Century Revival* (Lion Hudson, 2012, pp 191 £9.99 ISBN 978 0 7459 5349 6).

Unfortunately this book is something of a curate's egg. The writer has set out to tell the story of the eighteenth century revival and has clearly done considerable reading and research on the personalities involved. His detailed account of the dispute between John Wesley and George Whitefield in regard to predestination, which brought about the rift between the Calvinist and the Arminian actors in the revival is well written and covers all the difficulties they faced in attempting to hold on to their friendship. There is a brief description of the growth of the two groups and later in the book some description of their development and growth into separation.

Much of the book is taken up with potted sketches of the lives of all those Turnbull recognises as 'revivalists', from Whitefield and the Wesleys to Grimshaw and John Newton. In this sense it is more "Stories of the Revival" than "the story". Many of these brief biographies are, in themselves fascinating. One of the particular areas of the writer's interest is the protagonist's conversion experiences. These he has sought out and offers with explanations and interpretations.

From the opening pages of the foreword to the conclusion in chapter eight we are left in no doubt that this is a book written by an enthusiastic evangelical for evangelicals and through an evangelical perspective. There would be nothing wrong with this in itself, if we were presented with a wider understanding of the world in which this story is set. Perhaps the major failing is the lack of explanation for theological terms and ideas along with the assumption that everyone will have the same understanding as the writer. This rather narrow view makes it difficult for readers from a less emphatically evangelical ecclesiological background to get to grips with the concepts.

One of the difficulties is a lack of clarity. This is seen in a variety of ways; a failure to explain what he means by terms such as 'new birth'. This is used throughout the book with only a very casual reference to what might be meant. The term can cover everything from the Wesleyan concept of 'New Creation' to the more contentious, in an Anglican context, credo-baptist understanding and much in between. Throughout the book there are incidences of repetition of stories with contrary variations including Howell Harris's failure to be ordained and the author's description of Walker as not falling into laxity of life at Oxford and quoting Walker on the following page who describes himself as dissolute. There are occasional instances of a presumption of knowledge on the reader's part, such as an incomplete story regarding George Whitfield's preaching at St Margaret's Westminster, which will leave many readers puzzled.

For the reader with an interest in the characters who were at the heart of the Eighteenth Century revival this book will offer fascinating pen sketches of many of these preachers, lay and ordained. It would be a useful starting point for someone with an interest but no background. There is a lack of clear narrative, but a tangled web of stories about larger than life characters and some of the relationships they formed. It is a pity that the context is largely absent. We are not helped to understand the 'why' or often the 'how' of the works these men, almost all men, undertook. Even less are we enlightened regarding the theology which underpinned most of their ventures. It would be all too easy to assume that they were all driven by the same beliefs and desires. Richard Turnbull touches on the differences in the Calvinist and Arminian viewpoints but not with sufficient information to help someone without a full theological understanding to get to grips with the very real differences which still build barriers today.

Turnbull's enthusiasm is unfailing and his clear belief in what he sees as the evangelical commission leaps out from every page. One of the failings of many people of conviction is the belief that what they are convicted off requires no explanation. It is in this way *Reviving the Heart* may fail in its purpose.

RONALD AITCHISON

NOTES AND QUERIES

1594

REV CHARLES MANNING, BA

In the Notes and Queries entry number 1574 (*PWHS*, volume 55 no.6 (October, 2006)), I reported the dates recorded in the Lambeth Palace archives when Charles Manning became the Vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Hayes, Middlesex as being the 13 July 1739 following the death of James Baker. The records at Lambeth Palace also tells us that Charles Manning resigned in 1757. The record is unclear as to whether he resigned only from the appointment at St Mary the Virgin or from the Anglican Ministry. In St Mary the Virgin Church is a memorial to Manning and his wife Elizabeth which is surmounted by a marble bust carved by his Grandson Samuel. On the memorial is the date of Charles Manning's death in 1799. There is no record on the memorial of what Manning did between 1757 and 1799. In the Hayes registers there is no reference to Charles Manning's death or burial. However the archives for Hawkesmoor's Grade 1 listed masterpiece, Christ Church, Spitalfields, Middlesex, London, is the register from 1538 to 1812. This contains the following entry for 6 January 1799. Revd Chls Manning St Bh Bishopgte 85. (Reverend Charles Manning St Botolph, Bishopgate aged 85). As Manning was born on 22 January 1715 it is reasonable to say that his is the Charles Manning who was a friend of John Wesley and attended his 4th and 5th Conference. In the 'Searcher's Reports and Burials Register' of St Botolph, Bishopgate, City of London 1798 to 1800 there is the entry for January 1799. Rev Charles Manning 85 years Age 4 Clfch 1 (Rev Charles Manning aged 85 died of Old Age and was buried on 4th January 1799 Clfch cost of the burial £1) If anyone can say what the letters Clfch mean that could add important information. Also if anyone knows what occupation Manning followed after leaving St Mary the Virgin from 1757 to 1799 that would open up a new source of research. So far I have been unable to locate the place and date of the burial of Manning's wife Elizabeth in 1796. If anyone can supply information about the Rev Charles Manning and his family it will give a fuller picture of this important early Wesleyan family.

DONALD H. RYAN

1595

CHARLES BELL (1846-99)

I am starting to investigate the career of the Wesleyan architect Charles Bell. Born in Grantham, he practised in London from 1870, and was responsible for a wide range of public buildings in many parts of the country, including 'over 60 Wesleyan chapels', according to his obituaries. Epworth, Gloucester, Leicester, York, Oxford and many London churches were among his commissions. He was also a representative to Conference, and a member of the Connexional Temperance Committee. Any information about his life and work would be gratefully received

MARTIN WELLINGS

We are pleased to welcome the following new Members:

Mrs Sophia Cowley	Bishop Auckland
Rev Gordon James,	Bristol
Rev David Mullins MA BSc	Bishop's Stortford
Mr David Miller	Halifax
Rev Adam J. Stevenson MA	Oxford
Mr Darren Webster BA	Rhydyfelin, Aberystwyth

We send our sympathies to the families of the following who have died:

Miss H. Mary Hall	Sheffield
Rev Dr Edwin Schell BS BD	Baltimore, USA
Rev William D Horton MA	Bury St Edmunds
Rev Dr Peter W. Gentry	Weston Super Mare

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All Members and Associate Members are entitled to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Society, may use the facilities of the Wesley Historical Society Library and attend any lecture, conference or event organized by the society.

New members who join partway through the year will receive the copies of the Proceedings already published in that year.

All members receive post-free the tri-annual *Proceedings*. Whilst no complete sets of the Proceedings remain in stock some back numbers may be purchased. Please contact the Marketing Officer for details of which issues are still available.

Subscriptions made payable to the Wesley Historical Society to be sent to the Registrar: Rev. Donald H Ryan MTh, 15 Foxlands Drive, Lloyd Hill, Penn, Wolverhampton WV4 5NB. Email donaldhryan@hotmail.com

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