

*The*

METHODIST

PILGRIM

*in*

ENGLAND





THE METHODIST PILGRIM  
IN ENGLAND

*By the Same Author*

- TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS: *a Play*  
A CHARGE TO KEEP: *an Introduction to the  
People called Methodists*  
CHARLES WESLEY AS REVEALED BY HIS  
LETTERS  
THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS AND EARLY  
METHODISM  
THE STORY OF CLEETHORPES  
THE STORY OF METHODISM IN NEWLAND  
METHODISM AND THE LOVE-FEAST  
JOHN CENNICK: *a Handlist of his Writings,*  
*1718-55*  
REPRESENTATIVE VERSE OF CHARLES  
WESLEY  
WILLIAM GRIMSHAW, 1708-1763  
CHARLES WESLEY'S VERSE: *an Introduction*  
JOHN WESLEY'S FIRST HYMN-BOOK  
(Edited, with G. W. Williams)  
A UNION CATALOGUE OF THE PUBLICATIONS  
OF JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY  
JOHN WESLEY AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
FROM WESLEY TO ASBURY: *Studies in Early  
American Methodism*



*The*  
METHODIST  
PILGRIM  
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FRANK BAKER

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RUTLAND: ACADEMY BOOKS

ISBN 0-914960-07-5  
Library of Congress Card No. 75-44553  
Printed in United States of America

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*First published, 1951,  
by the Epworth Press, London*

*Second edition, 1961,  
The Epworth Press*

*Third edition, revised, 1976,  
Academy Books*

*Printed and bound by  
Sharp Offset Printing Inc.  
P. O. Box 757  
Rutland, VT 05701*



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## FOREWORD

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THIS BOOK AROSE FROM A SUGGESTION OF THE OVERSEAS Reception Committee of the Ecumenical Methodist Council (British Section) that our overseas visitors would appreciate some information about the historic shrines of British Methodism. There exist a few handbooks about the main centres—such as Wesley's Chapel, London, and the New Room, Bristol—but no *general* survey of what is to be seen and how it may be reached. At the same time we British Methodists have not always known and appreciated fully the wealth of history in our own streets, so that a rather more comprehensive guide should be of real service to us, as well as to those visitors who are able to make a protracted stay in one area.

In the difficult task of selection and condensation two main principles have been followed. Firstly, the place of pilgrimage should normally offer some tangible relic of the past—a sight, not merely a site. Although it has seemed unwise to adhere rigidly to this principle—as in the case of Aldersgate Street, for example—it has been kept constantly in mind.

Secondly, only places with some *unique* significance in Methodist history have normally been included, so that there has been no attempt to list the hundreds of houses in which Wesley stayed, chapels (and trees!) where he preached, and similar features, which can be pointed out in almost every part of the country. Some places of secondary importance have been mentioned, however, because of their nearness to a place of primary importance.

Five key areas have been chosen—we might say, have chosen themselves. These have been treated in some



detail in the chronological order of their significance in the rise of Methodism: Epworth, the birthplace of the Wesleys; Oxford, where they were educated and made their first tentative experiments as Methodists; London, where their hearts were warmed and the Methodist Societies came into being; Bristol, their western headquarters and the strategic centre for the spread of Methodism across the Atlantic; and the Birmingham area, where Francis Asbury trained for his great task in America. Within these areas mention is made of many shrines of minor importance, and excursions are suggested to places of some distance away. These subsidiary sections are distinguished by smaller type, and should be ignored if the pilgrim's time is very short.

The north and north-west posed a serious problem. They are of tremendous importance in the growth of Methodism because it was particularly to such rapidly growing industrial areas that Wesley sent his preachers. Yet the hand of material progress has all too often brushed away the traces of religious history, while the places of unique Methodist interest in the north are for the most part widely separated from each other, and often quite off the beaten track. After a brief section on Newcastle, Wesley's northern headquarters, it has therefore seemed wise simply to list the more important places north of Birmingham. Some day they may secure a *Methodist Pilgrim* for themselves! The same is true of England's neighbours. While one town in Scotland and a few places in Wales have been mentioned, this is of course quite inadequate, and the increased difficulty of access has led to the complete omission of Ireland, which in any case merits separate treatment.

Practically every place mentioned has been personally explored, but inerrancy cannot be claimed, even apart from the continuous process of demolition and building in the areas involved. My thanks are due to many who



have assisted in the task of gathering and checking information, and more particularly to those who have provided hospitality and helped to protect the author from errors by their detailed knowledge of certain localities: the Rev. O. Mordaunt Burrows, M.A., B.D., and the Rev. C. Povah Bardsley, of Epworth; The Rev. Reginald Kissack, M.A., B.D. and Mrs. Kissack, and Mr. W. Knight Loveridge, of Oxford; Mr. H. W. Mansfield, of London; the Rev. and Mrs. E. T. Selby, of Bristol; the Rev. and Mrs. W. H. White and Mr. and Mrs. E. Pedley, of Great Barr, and Mr. J. H. Lavender of West Bromwich. The President of the Wesley Historical Society, the Rev. F. F. Bretherton, B.A., has been a constant source of encouragement and help, and the Rev. Wesley F. Swift has again proved himself a true friend by his candid criticisms and careful proof-reading. The Connexional Editor, the Rev. Leslie F. Church, B.A., Ph.D., has given helpful advice, and the Book Steward, the Rev. Frank H. Cumbers, B.A., B.D., and his staff have exercised notable patience in waiting for the manuscript and remarkable speed in ushering it through the press. To all these, and many others unnamed, my very warm thanks.

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*Supplementary notes to the Third Edition.*

In the preparation of this new edition I wish to record my gratitude to several friends who have assisted with research: the Rev. Dr. John C. Bowmer of London, the Rev. Thomas Hall of Wednesbury, the Rev. W. Stanley Rose of Ilkley, and the Librarians of the City of Bristol and the Borough of West Bromwich. I am especially indebted to the Rev. Edwin Schell, of Baltimore, whose enthusiasm for the work fostered the desire



to make it more fully available; to the Rev. Frank Wanek, also of Baltimore, whose organization of the United Methodist Heritage Tours (along with Ed Schell) caused me to prepare the first tourguide for those groups, and later a revision, both indebted to my *Methodist Pilgrim*; and lastly to Mr. E. Farley Sharp, the publisher of Academy Books, for his important leadership in making this volume possible.

In order to reduce costs I have avoided mere stylistic alterations, but have tried to incorporate all revisions made necessary by changes in buildings and streets. I now realize that in my desire to help the pilgrim I was probably too specific in my directions, and this has boomeranged upon me, calling for more changes in detail than have been practicable. In spite of careful checking, therefore, the reader is warned to be alert for either missed or subsequent changes in such things as street names and 'bus numbers, and wherever possible should secure the co-operation of a local guide or at least an up-to-date map or transportation schedule.

Assistance and literature may be secured in advance from the British Tourist Authority, 64 St. James Street, London, and London Transport, 55 Broadway, Westminster, S.W.1.

FRANK BAKER

*Duke University, Durham, N. C., 1975*





John Wesley's Seal





## EPWORTH—HOME OF THE WESLEYS

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AS EARLY AS 1751, STEPHEN WHATLEY'S *England's Gazetteer*, after briefly describing Epworth in Lincolnshire as 'the best Town in the Isle of Axholm, . . . a long straggling place', added that it was 'the birthplace of the two Methodist preachers, Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, whose father was rector of this parish'. Its fame ever since has been based on this fact, and it may probably be regarded as the Mecca of the Methodist pilgrim. It is somewhat difficult of access, however, and failing a private car or taxi the most convenient approach is by bus from Doncaster. A tortuous hour's journey takes us through typical fenland, dotted with windmills and scored by drains and dykes. In summer and autumn many of the open fields around Epworth itself are striped with the varied hues of the crops belonging to different owners, a reminder that strip-farming, a relic of feudal days, still persists here.

We may in some measure be grateful for Epworth's seclusion and conservatism, for they have preserved this little market town much as it was during the years 1694 to 1735 when the Rev. Samuel Wesley and his wondrous wife Susanna were raising their brood of poets and saints. Its population remains about 2,000, and the centre of its life is still the old market-place, where the traveller will probably alight. Here he will see the stone cross from whose steps John Wesley preached on many occasions—though the cross itself has been moved from its original position nearer the centre. It was here that Wesley preached on Sunday, 4th July, 1790, the last of his scores of visits, as an old man of 87, recording in his *Journal* :



'As soon as the afternoon service ended, I began in the market-place to press that awful question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" on such a congregation as was never seen at Epworth before.'

Methodists of modern days have followed Wesley's example, and it is good to know that during the Christian Commando Campaign in 1946 forty young people knelt by that market cross in token of their surrender to the call of Christ, on a day which could hardly have been more appropriate—24th May, the anniversary of Wesley's own conversion.

At the opposite side of the market-place from the cross is the Red Lion Inn, where Wesley lodged on his first visit to Epworth after his father's death, and on later occasions. At the end of the lane past the Red Lion is the Old Rectory, standing in spacious grounds, the entrance being round the corner on the left, on the main road to Owston Ferry.

After serving as the parish rectory until 1954, this historic building was bought by the World Methodist Council and restored to its appearance at the time it was rebuilt by Samuel Wesley after being destroyed by fire in 1709. On that occasion little Jackie Wesley was trapped in his bedroom, dragged a chest to the window, and was rescued by a neighbour, mounted on the shoulders of another.

The modern restoration made it possible to open up the kitchen and the room adjoining, where Susanna Wesley both educated her children and held services for the parishioners, much to her absent husband's disquiet. This may well have sown in young John Wesley the seed of unorthodox religious activities. The restoration left almost untouched the large attic known as 'Jeffrey's Chamber,' the focal point of the reputed poltergeist disturbing the rectory in 1716-17, about which John Wesley secured detailed accounts from the members of the family who were present.



The Old Rectory continues to be a home, but the Warden and his wife are able to entertain paying guests for limited periods, as well as small groups for conferences or retreats. Arrangements should be made in advance. The building is open for visitors on weekdays from 10 a.m. until noon, and from 2.0 p.m. until 4.0 p.m., and at other times by arrangement with the Warden, The Old Rectory, Epworth, Lincolnshire (Telephone Epworth 268).

Retracing our steps to the market-place, we next veer right along the narrow cobbled street, past the National School on the right, into the lime-shaded pathway leading up to St. Andrew's Church, which dates from the 13th century. Among the church's treasures are the old octagonal font in which most of the Wesley children were baptized, and two beautifully carved 16th-century chairs, kept within the chancel rails. The more ornate chair is said to have belonged to Susanna Wesley.

A massive old door with a central iron boss opens off the chancel into the vestry. In the safe here are locked away other treasures, including the parish registers, only fragments from 1538 to 1601, and then complete volumes from 1710 onwards, the records for the intervening period having been lost in the rectory fire. The 1710 register is too late to record the baptism of any of the Wesley children, though there are entries of the baptisms of some of John Wesley's nephews and nieces, the children of Richard and Susanna Ellison, between 1724 and 1734; of the marriage of his sister Mary to their father's protégé John Whitelamb; and of the burial on 28th April, 1735, of the old rector. Many of the entries during 1727 to 1729 were made by John Wesley himself, who was serving at the time as his father's curate. This volume, covering the years 1710 to 1782, has suffered severely from its damp sojourn in the parish chest, however, so that it cannot be handled by visitors. Another precious relic locked away



in the safe is a beautiful little silver chalice inscribed *Epworthiae/In Insula de Axholm/A.D. 1706*—almost certainly the vessel from which John Wesley took his first communion at the age of eight or nine. Most probably this was shortly after the great occasion on 15th July, 1712, when Bishop Wake held a Confirmation at Epworth, laying hands on 800 persons, one of whom was surely young John Wesley.

The simple Communion Table used by Samuel Wesley was sold during the restoration of 1868, but was eventually secured by the Methodists of Epworth, and is still used for its original purpose in the Wesley Memorial Church. The original pulpit was also removed during the 1868 restoration, but its present whereabouts is unknown, though it is supposed to have been taken to America.

In the graveyard, in a quiet corner near the south chancel door, is the tombstone of Samuel Wesley, on which are two rough pieces of ironstone marking the place where John Wesley stood to preach.<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that in 1742, a few weeks before Wesley hastened to London to find his mother 'on the borders of eternity', he had returned to Epworth for the first time since his father's death. The Epworth curate, however, refused him permission to preach in the church. As the people left the service on Sunday, 6th June, Wesley's travelling companion stood in the churchyard announcing that 'Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock'. In his *Journal* Wesley recorded :

'Accordingly at six I came, and found such a congregation as I believe Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church, upon my father's tombstone, and cried, "The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost".'

<sup>1</sup> Not 'John Wesley's footprints', as local tradition is apt to assert. The ornamental railings surrounding the tombstone were added in 1872; originally the stones rested on low brickwork, as do some of the adjoining memorials.



For over a week he remained in the area, preaching and forming societies in the neighbouring villages, and returning every evening to preach from his father's tomb. From this period he gave a surprisingly large proportion of his time to Lincolnshire—which became one of the chief strongholds of Methodism—and especially to his native town, to which he referred warmly in 1784 as 'Epworth, which I still love beyond most places in the world'.

Turning right into the High Street on leaving the church, the visitor soon reaches on the left the beautiful set of buildings erected in 1889 by modern Methodists from all over the world as a tribute to their founders—the Wesley Memorial Church. In the manse on the left lives the superintendent minister, a very busy man with oversight of about forty churches in the wide Epworth and Crowle Circuit. The dignified beauty of the church's exterior, with its slender spire, is matched by the quiet reverence of the interior. Over the oak communion screen shines a stained glass window depicting Christ commissioning his disciples, surmounted by a glass medallion of the Wesley brothers. The Communion Table itself was formerly used by the Wesleys in the parish church. The pair of oak salvers on the table were made from a beam which formerly supported the church bells, and were presented by the rector and churchwardens in 1938. The decorative oak font is happily dedicated to the mother of the Wesleys. In the western transept is a memorial tablet to her most famous son. The church itself is his chief memorial, however, and as such should command the generosity of those spiritual sons of Wesley who realize that its upkeep is far more than the Methodists of Epworth can accomplish unaided.

Opposite the Wesley Memorial Church is the Kilham Memorial Church, now used as a Methodist Youth Centre. Appropriately enough, for Alexander Kilham, born in Epworth on 10th July, 1762, was one of the *enfants terribles* of Methodism, a brilliant and devoted preacher who in 1797 led



the first important secession, to form the Methodist New Connexion. Many of the democratic reforms which he advocated have now been written into the revised ecclesiastical constitution of Methodism. On a farm to the west of Epworth is an outbuilding which tradition says was used as a weaving shed by Alexander Kilham and his father. Opposite the manse will be noticed an old house with a Dutch gable, a reminder that three centuries ago Dutch engineers headed by Cornelius Vermuyden undertook the formidable task of draining the fens in this area.

One of the formative influences of Kilham's early youth was the well-known Methodist preacher George Shadford, who was stationed at Epworth in 1778 after his return from America, where he was one of the Methodist pioneers. Shadford was born at **Scotter**, about 9 miles east of Epworth by road via Owston Ferry (six miles as the crow flies), on 19th January, 1739. His youthful annoyance at being stopped from playing football on Sundays was eventually transformed to a desire to read serious books in the churchyard. It was not until some years later, in 1760, as a militiaman at Gainsborough, that he met the Methodists. After his period of service he returned to Scotter, and was converted in 1762 at a farmhouse Methodist meeting. Soon he became a preacher and conducted his first service at Wildsworth, a mile or so south of Owston Ferry. Summoned into the full itinerancy by Wesley, at the Leeds Conference of 1772, he heard the call of America voiced by Captain Thomas Webb. He was sent out with Thomas Rankin the following year, accompanied by a characteristic note from Wesley: 'I let you loose, George, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can.'

Scotter also deserves mention as the scene of the only Primitive Methodist Conference to be held in a rural village. This was in 1829, when the village was the spearhead of a great evangelistic movement in North Lincolnshire. The Conference was the more memorable in that it was the occasion for adopting the Deed Poll which secured legal status for Primitive Methodism, and also because it inaugurated a mission to the U.S.A., one of the four missionaries sent being a woman, Ruth Watkins.

The traveller who visits Epworth by car might care to make a detour to **Wroot**, about five miles to the west by road. For



during an important period of their youth this village was home to the Wesleys. On 6th April, 1722, Samuel Wesley was instituted in the living of Wroot, holding it in plurality with Epworth. Very soon the whole family moved with him to the rectory there, successive curates being left in charge of the work at Epworth, supervised by periodical visits from the rector. In 1728, the family returned to Epworth, and the curate was installed at Wroot. The central portion of Wroot rectory, now a private house, is much the same as in Wesley's day. It stands back in spacious grounds on the left of the road, about half a mile north of the church. In 1734 Wesley resigned the living in favour of John Whitelamb, who had assisted him as an amanuensis in his monumental Latin work on the Book of Job, and who had recently married his daughter Mary. Mary (or 'Molly') died before the year was out and lies buried at Wroot. A brass plate to her memory may be seen in the small brick church, though this is not the original building, which was superseded in 1796. Whitelamb remained as rector until his death in 1769, and a stone to his memory meets the visitor walking up the path to the church. At least once during his incumbency, on Sunday 13th June, 1742, Whitelamb offered his pulpit to his brother-in-law John Wesley, who preached twice to packed congregations.

Ten miles south of Epworth, on the road to Lincoln, is **Gainsborough**. The pilgrim can still see 'The Old Hall', a magnificent timbered building where John Wesley first preached in 1759 to 'a rude, wild multitude'. John Robinson, one of the Pilgrim Fathers, was a pastor at Gainsborough, and grateful Americans have built a beautiful church here to his memory.

**Lincoln** itself John Wesley usually by-passed, as he did most cathedral cities, presumably on the assumption that they already had sufficient clergy to care for their spiritual needs. It was on the evening of Tuesday, 13th June, 1780, when he was nearly 77 years old, that he preached his first sermon here, in the Castle yard. For a service on the following day he was given the hospitality of the assize court within the Castle. He could hardly have escaped remembering on this occasion—whether he mentioned it publicly or not!—that 75 years earlier to the month his father had been lying in this same Castle, imprisoned for debt. It had been an imprisonment brought upon him not mainly by improvidence, however, but by misfortune, allied to persecution on account of his outspoken



religious and political opinions.

Passing from the ancient Castle (built by William the Conqueror in 1068) to the only less ancient Cathedral, commenced ten years later, it is worth while to pause in Exchequer Gate, at the Diocesan Registry. Here are many ancient records of the widespread diocese, perhaps the most interesting to Methodists being the only known records of the baptisms of John and Charles Wesley. The Diocesan Registry also possesses a wonderful collection of 'Dissenters' Certificates', the documents whereby early Methodists and others secured legal protection for their places of worship under the terms of the Toleration Act of 1689.

Of the magnificent Cathedral itself we must not speak, but the Methodist visitor should see the window in the Chapter House depicting Wesley walking round the Minster with the Dean during his final visit in 1790, when he remarked :

'After dinner we took a walk in and round the Minster, which I really think is more elegant than that at York in various parts of the structure, as well as in its admirable situation.'

Among the many treasures of the Cathedral Library is a manuscript account of the Wesleys' mission to Georgia, in the hand of their Oxford Methodist companion, the Rev. Benjamin Ingham; in several details this manuscript supplements the Wesleys' own accounts.

In the Usher Art Gallery, just below the Cathedral, is a fine stone bust of John Wesley.

One of the most romantic figures in British Methodism's missionary enterprise is that of John Hunt (1812-1848), one of the pioneers of Methodism in the Fiji Islands. Born at **Hykeham Moor**, four miles south-west of Lincoln, he was converted in the Wesleyan Chapel at **Thorpe-on-the-Hill**, two miles further on, where are exhibited his writing-desk, clothes which he wore in the Fiji Islands, and some native curios which he sent home.

At **Raithby Hall**, about 25 miles east of Lincoln, lived Squire Robert Carr Brackenbury, one of Wesley's great friends, and pioneer of Methodism in the Channel Islands.



## OXFORD—CRADLE OF METHODISM

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THE OXFORD IN WHICH JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY SPENT about twenty of the most formative years of their lives, in which George Whitefield was a poor servitor at Pembroke College and Thomas Coke a lordly gentleman commoner at Jesus College, was not much different from the Oxford familiar to Samuel Wesley senior, the future rector of Epworth, who was entered at Exeter College in 1683 as a *pauper scholaris*, and left during the famous trial of the seven bishops in 1688. It is probably best seen through the eyes of a contemporary of the Wesleys, Thomas Salmon :

‘The whole Town, including the Suburbs, is a Mile in length from East to West, and almost as much in Breadth from North to South . . . The Gates on the East and North are still left standing, tho’ the Walls are almost intirely demolished, as well as the Fortifications erected by the Royalists in the Time of the Civil Wars : The Castle also, which stands at the West End of the Town, no longer deserves that Name, the Ruins whereof now serve for the County Gaol, as the North Gate (which has obtained the Name of *Bocardo*) does for the Town Gaol. . . .

‘The principal Street of this City runs from East to West, almost the Length of the Town, but under different Names : The East End goes by the Name of *High-Street*, the Middle of it is called the *Old Butcher-Row*,<sup>1</sup> and the West End *Castle-Street* : The East End forms a very spacious Street, clean and well paved, and illuminated with [very primitive oil] lamps in the Winter : It is adorned with the Front of three fine Colleges, viz. *University*, *Queen’s*, and *All-Souls*, the University Church of *St. Mary’s* and the new beautiful Church of *All-Saints*;<sup>2</sup> but the private Houses are meanly built, and very much diminish the Beauty of it. I do not remember six Houses in this fine

<sup>1</sup> Now Queen Street.    <sup>2</sup> Erected 1706-8 by Dean Aldrich.



Street built either with Brick or Stone. . . . Another Thing, which takes off much from its Beauty, is the Butcher-Market, held here every *Wednesday* and *Saturday*. . . . Another great Nuisance is the Dirt, which People bring out of their Houses, and lay in the Middle of the Street in Heaps every Morning.<sup>3</sup>

Our picture then must be of a fair-sized city in which ugliness jostled beauty, and learning struggled with industry and dirt, just as there was a traditional and sometimes bitter rivalry leading to bloodthirsty battles between Town and Gown. There were one or two broad streets, but for the most part they were narrow and paved with coarse cobbles, and down the centre ran a 'kennel' or gutter overflowing with all kinds of refuse.

The university itself was (and is) quite different in its operation from most modern universities, which usually consist of a central university block together with separate buildings appropriated to the various departments of learning, and also halls of residence. Oxford and Cambridge universities, however, consist of a number of colleges which are complete educational units in themselves, each with chapel, hall, and library, but incorporated to form a university, and linked by one or two communal buildings such as (in the case of Oxford) the Bodleian Library, the Sheldonian Theatre, and the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

The Methodist visitor to Oxford will almost certainly wish to start his pilgrimage from John Wesley's Rooms in Lincoln College, the headquarters of the 'Holy Club', the foreshadowing of the Methodist Revival. Wesley's own estimate of the importance of his Oxford training may be gathered from the fact that to the end of his days—even in his will—he spoke of himself as 'Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College', and in 1772 wrote to his brother Charles:

<sup>3</sup> *The Foreigner's Companion*, 1748.



'I often cry out, "*Vitae me redde priori*".<sup>4</sup> Let me be again an Oxford Methodist! I am often in doubt whether it would not be best for me to resume all my Oxford rules, great and small. I did then walk closely with God and redeem the time. But what have I been doing these thirty years?'

Walking down High Street ('The High') from Carfax (from 'quatre voies,' 'four roads'), Oxford's traffic hub, the first turning on the left is Turl Street ('The Turl'), which contains three colleges. The first on the right is Lincoln. It was believed that Wesley lived in the block separating Lincoln's two quadrangles, and in 1926 a bronze bust (copied from that reputedly by Roubiliac in the National Portrait Gallery) was placed outside near one of the windows as a tribute. Present on that occasion was Bishop J. W. Hamilton, who was largely responsible for an appeal to American Methodists whereby Wesley's supposed rooms were beautifully restored. Recent researches by V. H. H. Green, however, himself a Fellow of Lincoln, show that Wesley occupied two sets of rooms, one over the main entrance, but neither of them the traditional suite. No matter: the important thing is the realization that in this building he lived, that in rooms like these Oxford Methodism developed. In the traditional rooms period furnishings and Wesley relics will be found, including a copy of Romney's portrait of Wesley. A copy, by Romney himself, hangs in Christ Church Hall.

John Wesley was elected a Fellow of Lincoln on 17th March, 1726, six months after his ordination as deacon. He was twenty-two years old. On the foundation of Lincoln were twelve Fellows in addition to the Rector, and the small emolument attached to the Fellowship was sufficient to render a man of Wesley's simple tastes financially independent. This Fellowship, indeed, was of real importance in the rise of Methodism, for it

<sup>4</sup> 'Give me back my former life!'



freed Wesley from the circumscribing duties of a parochial ministry, while at the same time giving him (as he at any rate believed) the right to preach in *any* parish. For three years his residence at Lincoln alternated with spells of service as his father's curate at Epworth or Wroot. In the interval his brother Charles, his junior by five years, had also become serious-minded, applying himself both to his studies and to his devotions. During the early months of 1729 Charles gathered around him a tiny group of likeminded undergraduates, and soon they were laughingly pointed out as 'Methodists'. When John Wesley returned in November, 1729, he became the natural leader of the group, and these rooms of his their headquarters. Under his guidance the members not only studied the Latin and Greek classics and the Greek New Testament, but the teaching and practices of the Early Church, and the claims of personal religion. This led not only to their taking Holy Communion every week, but also to works of mercy in the Oxford prisons and workhouses. Soon the nicknames flew thick and fast—'Bible Moths', 'Sacramentarians', 'The Enthusiasts', 'The Holy Club', and many others. Christ Church and Merton were full of gibing students, but the focus of Oxford's scorn was Lincoln, for was not the chief Methodist a Fellow there? Already Lincoln had a reputation for careful learning in an age of levity, but Methodism strongly reinforced this reputation. One of the senior Fellows, Richard Hutchins, later to become Rector of the college, also threw in his lot with the little group, as did his more famous pupil James Hervey, author of *Meditations among the Tombs* and other sentimental best-sellers of the day.

Lincoln chapel is much as it was in Wesley's time, and the square pulpit from which he regularly preached is still preserved. The library which he used has been transformed into living rooms, though the fittings were incorporated in the new library. In the College Register,



Matriculation Register, Buttery Books, and other documents, may be seen entries relating to Wesley, including his resignation from his Fellowship on 1st June, 1751. The Hall has been restored several times, and the portraits on its walls include one of Richard Hutchins.

Farther along the Turl on the left is Jesus College, since its foundation in 1571 by Dr. Hugh Price of Brecon a predominantly Welsh college. Its chief claim to popular regard is a huge silver punch bowl capable of holding ten gallons, presented in 1732. Methodist interest, however, focuses on the college's association with Dr. Thomas Coke (1747-1814), the first Bishop of American Methodism, the Father of Methodist Missions and, like the college founder, a son of Brecon. Coke matriculated at Jesus in 1764 as a gentleman commoner, took his B.A. degree in 1768 (when he left Oxford), and his M.A. in 1770. In 1775, shortly before he met Wesley and threw in his lot with Methodism, he was awarded the Doctorate of Civil Law.

On the opposite side of the Turl is Exeter College. Here it was that young Samuel Wesley, having thrown off the yoke of the Dissenters, began the University education that was long reserved for Churchmen. He 'footed it' from London in August 1683 with forty-five shillings in his pocket, working his passage at Exeter as a servitor. One of the expedients by which he preserved his financial equilibrium—as in later years he was to secure the living of Epworth—was by writing verse. Here he penned his first and strangest volume—*Maggots: or, Poems on Several Subjects, never before Handled. By a Schollar.* Strangely enough, his undergraduate days heralded those of his more famous sons, being distinguished by errands of mercy to the prisoners in the Castle. Not that he neglected his studies, for when in the Revolution year of 1688 he obtained his degree, he was the only student of Exeter to do so. At least one of the Oxford Methodists also belonged to Exeter—Thomas Broughton, later (1743-1777) the Secretary of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in which capacity he supervised missions in India and Georgia, as well as publishing Bibles, books and tracts.



Between Exeter and Lincoln Colleges runs Brasenose Lane, with its central 'kennel' or gutter so typical of Wesley's day. Radcliffe Square, at the other end, shows both 'kennel' and the cobble paving which formed the main street surfaces in the 18th century—trying for thinly-shod feet, but very hard-wearing. Radcliffe Camera, the great library building in the centre, was not there during Wesley's residence, but the Bodleian Library on the left was. Here Wesley studied long after he had forsaken the life of an Oxford don.

At the south side of Radcliffe Square is the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, where in ancient times degrees were conferred, and which has remained the University Church. It was here about the time of his ordination in 1725 that John Wesley made his first convert, young Robin Griffiths, son of the vicar of Broadway. And from St. Mary's pulpit<sup>5</sup> sounded forth in trumpet tones the distinctive message of the Methodist revival, to the consternation of University dignitaries accustomed to the cold official sermons normally dealing with some recondite point of morals or philosophy. Seven times John Wesley was called upon to preach the University Sermon, until on the 24th August, 1744, he shut himself out from further invitation by lashing Oxford officialdom in a sermon on 'Scriptural Christianity.'

On this occasion, at any rate, Wesley must have been conscious of a spiritual link through nearly two centuries with Archbishop Cranmer, who here in St. Mary's had boldly withdrawn his recantation of the Protestant faith, and had gone to the stake smiling. Wesley could still see, as we can, the marks in the pillar opposite the pulpit where the scaffold was erected for Cranmer's expected submission. Charles Wesley also preached the University Sermon on at least two occasions, his utterance in 1742 being the famous 'Awake, thou that sleepest' sermon, which passed through fifty editions.

Not only was St. Mary's the centre of Methodism's declaration of its evangelical principles. It was also the

<sup>5</sup> The present pulpit dates only from 1827.



focus of its sacramental witness. George Whitefield tells how the statutory Communion service here at the beginning of each term was so neglected 'that very few masters, and no undergraduates but the Methodists, attended upon it'. He himself had watched them 'go through a ridiculing crowd to receive the holy Eucharist at St. Mary's'—and had secretly envied them. At length, in 1734, Whitefield was sought out by Charles Wesley, to whom he had sent a message by 'a poor aged apple-woman' about an attempted suicide in one of the work-houses. The apple-woman providentially disobeyed his instructions about not mentioning his name, and so Charles Wesley sent Whitefield an invitation to breakfast at Christ Church the following morning. The conversation, and the evangelical books loaned to him, confirmed Whitefield's desire to link himself with the despised Methodists. His public witness to this fact was at the University Church :

'I had no sooner received the sacrament publicly on a weekday at St. Mary's, but I was set up as a mark for all the polite students that knew me to shoot at.'

To strengthen him in this hour of trial, however, Charles Wesley accompanied Whitefield from St. Mary's back to his rooms in Pembroke College. We can still follow in the trembling but triumphant Whitefield's footsteps, for the pair would almost certainly march back along the High to Carfax, and then down St. Aldate's on the left to where on the right Pembroke stands behind St. Aldate's Church. Most pilgrims to Pembroke seek the rooms of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who lived over the gateway tower from 1728 to 1731. Whitefield joined what Johnson called the "nest of singing birds" the following year. In 1736 he was ordained, and quickly commenced his great work as a freelance Methodist evangelist in Great Britain and America. Pembroke chapel was built during



Whitefield's first year there, and he would be present at its consecration by Dr. Potter, the Bishop of Oxford.

From Pembroke (where Whitefield's rooms are unidentified) we cross St. Aldate's to Christ Church, where each of the three Wesley brothers commenced his Oxford career—Samuel (1711-14), John (1720-26), and Charles (1726-35). The visitor entering under the famous Tom Tower into the spacious quadrangle cannot but be struck by the fact that everything about Christ Church seems to be on a lavish scale. Although we cannot point out the rooms occupied by any of the Wesley brothers, the magnificence of the surroundings will prove partial atonement. In the 18th century Christ Church had a high repute not only as the architectural showplace of the university, but as its chief centre of learning. Among many other things the pilgrim should see the great dining hall, with its carved oak roof and its huge fireplaces facing each other across the centre, and its magnificent collection of historical portraits. Just inside the doorway, numbered (perhaps symbolically) '1', is the portrait by Romney of John Wesley.

William Morgan, one of the first three Oxford Methodists, was also a Christ Church undergraduate, as was John Gambold, the member of the Holy Club who later became a Moravian bishop.

Linked inseparably with the college itself is the Cathedral, which also serves as the college chapel. In this beautiful Norman shrine the Wesley brothers worshipped regularly, and all the Oxford Methodists made it a rule to receive Holy Communion here every Sunday when they were not able to receive at their own colleges. In this cathedral John Wesley was ordained by Bishop Potter for his tremendous spiritual task, as Deacon on 19th September, 1725, and as Priest on 22nd September, 1728. Here also Charles Wesley was ordained Deacon by Bishop Potter, on 21st September, 1735, in order that



he might sail to Georgia as a clergyman, being ordained Priest a week later by the Bishop of London.

Leaving Christ Church by the Canterbury Gate on the east, we face Corpus Christi College, where one of the Holy Club, the Rev. Charles Kinchin, became Dean, though retaining his rectory at Dummer. He succeeded both in maintaining his Methodist witness at Oxford and in being a model pastor until his early death in 1742 robbed Oxford Methodism of one of its most promising sons. Dr. John Burton, the influential member of the Georgia Trustees who sponsored the Wesleys' mission to Georgia was a Fellow of Corpus during Wesley's time, and General Oglethorpe also had studied there for a short period.

Behind Corpus, along Merton Street, is Merton College, the home of another Oxford Methodist, and indeed the probable birthplace of the very name 'Methodist'. Robert Kirkham of Merton was one of the first three Methodists, one with whom the Wesleys took great pains—perhaps partly for the sake of his charming sisters. One of these was their beloved 'Varanese', the religious friend who in 1725 played such an important part in John Wesley's spiritual awakening, and who continued to exert a great influence over both brothers throughout their Oxford days and even later. Another student, who entered Merton in 1728, was Samuel Taylor, later an evangelical clergyman co-operating with the Wesleys, and present at their first Conference in 1744. Merton has not suffered much from the hand of the restorer, and the visitor wandering among its dark corridors and examining the treasures of its library (the oldest college library in Britain) can easily recapture the atmosphere of those days when the Wesleys with some difficulty dragged Bob Kirkham from his undergraduate carousings so that he might pay more heed to devotion and study.

Passing down cobble-paved Merton Street the first turn on the left, Logic Lane, brings us into the High once more, opposite the Queen's College, where Benjamin Ingham not only witnessed the famous 'boar's head' ceremony, and studied in the magnificent library, but became an ardent Methodist, accompanying the Wesleys on their mission to Georgia in 1736. Later he separated from them, first in order to further Moravianism in England, and then to found a denomination of his own. When the Wesleys visited Ingham here, they would remember how a hundred years earlier their maternal



grandfather had graduated from Queen's, long before he had chosen to go into the wilderness of Nonconformity with the two thousand ejected ministers, and long before he fathered that family of twenty-five, the last of whom, Susanna, was to become the Mother of Methodism.

Facing the eastern entrance to Queen's, up Queen's Lane, is St. Edmund Hall, the only survival of the mediaeval halls which were the forerunners of the modern colleges. St. Edmund Hall achieved a transitory fame in 1768 as the centre of a rebirth of Oxford Methodism. Six students were expelled for such practices as holding prayer-meetings, but most particularly for 'frequenting illicit conventicles in a private house in this town'. The trial of the students by the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Durell, took place in the Dining Hall; the sentences of expulsion were pronounced in the college chapel, and recorded in the Battel Book of the Hall under the date 11th March, 1768. Only one of the expelled students, Erasmus Middleton, became famous enough for inclusion in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but all contributed to the Evangelical Revival in the Anglican Church. St. Edmund Hall remained a centre of Methodist influence, however, and a year later a more famous and more 'Wesleyan' Methodist was admitted, Joseph Benson, coming straight from his position as classics master at Kingswood School. Because of his Methodism Benson was refused Holy Orders, and instead entered the ranks of Wesley's unordained helpers, becoming one of the greatest of Methodism's preachers and authors, elected as President of its Conference in 1798 and 1810. Eventually, from the vice-principalship of Isaac Crouch (1783-1806), St. Edmund Hall was reluctantly accepted as the acknowledged Evangelical centre in Oxford.

Continuing up Queen's Lane we come to New College, whose gardens are bounded by the only perfect remains of the 14th century city wall. New College Lane emerges opposite the Divinity School restored by Sir Christopher Wren, under whose magnificent stone-vaulted roof Parliament met when driven from London by the Great Plague in 1665. To the right of the Divinity School is the Clarendon Building, for long the home of the Oxford University Press, and in Wesley's time resplendently new. The adjoining building in Broad Street is the Sheldonian Theatre, built by Sir Christopher Wren, and the scene of the ceremonial functions of the University. Towards the far end of Broad Street a cross inlaid in the road



(opposite No. 8) marks the site of the martyrdom of Latimer and Ridley in 1555, Cranmer suffering the same fate on the same spot the following year.<sup>6</sup>

Turning left from Broad Street into Cornmarket Street we pass through what was the old Bocardo or North Gate, a narrow arched passageway through prison buildings stretching across the road from St. Michael's Church to St. Michael's Street. Had we come two hundred years earlier we should probably have found a hat at the end of a string dangling under our noses, let down from one of the four narrow mulioned windows in the room over the gate, while the whining cry would have greeted us, 'Pity the Bocardo Birds!' At that time debtors formed the bulk of the prisoners, though it was claimed that the martyred bishops had also been incarcerated there. The comparative freedom of the gatehouse itself, however, might easily be forfeited, as John Clayton, one of the Oxford Methodists, reported to John Wesley in 1732 :

'Bocardo, I fear, grows worse upon my hands. They have done nothing but quarrel ever since you left us, and they carried matters so high on Saturday that the bailiffs were sent for, who ordered Tomlyns to be fettered and put in the dungeon, where he lay some hours, and then, upon promise of his good behaviour, was released again.'

What are probably remains of the dungeon may be seen in the cellars of No. 35 Cornmarket Street, while the Northgate Tavern, No. 31, has in its cellars the remains of a tunnel under the road to St. Michael's. Against the north wall in St. Mary Magdalen's Church is preserved the door of a Bocardo cell. The gatehouse with its prison was demolished in 1771, but a generation earlier it had been one of the regular outlets for the Christian service of the Oxford Methodists, whose members visited the prisoners almost daily, teaching them to read, and endeavouring to settle their financial difficulties, as well as holding services for their spiritual benefit.

Yet of far more importance to the Wesleys in this respect was the Castle, that fine old Norman building, older than any part of the University, which is one of the

<sup>6</sup> Ashes and a stake have been discovered there, the stake being preserved in the Ashmolean. The bastion of the city wall where the bishops were probably immured may be seen up a court in Broad Street, almost opposite Balliol College front gate (No. 56).



most interesting remains of old Oxford, though very little explored by the visitor.<sup>7</sup> From the Bocardo, St. Michael's Street takes us along the line of the old city wall into New Inn Hall Street, opposite the Wesley Memorial Church, built on a bastion of the wall, and today the centre of Oxford Methodism. New Inn Hall Street, indeed, has been the focal point of Oxford Methodism since soon after the departure of the Wesleys, and even before, because John Wesley's grandfather (of the same name) was admitted as a student of the now demolished New Inn Hall in 1651. There was an active Methodist Society in Oxford at least from 1751, though the first trace of a 'preaching-house' seems to be that which is now Nos. 33 and 34 New Inn Hall Street, a building seating about two hundred, of which Wesley recorded in 1783:

'I preached in the new preaching-house at Oxford, a light-some, cheerful place, and well filled with rich and poor, scholars as well as townsmen.'

This building was succeeded by the 'Old Chapel' (1817) in the same street, and then in 1878 by the Wesley Memorial Church.

Turning right at the south end of New Inn Hall Street we find ourselves in Castle Street. Modern pilgrims fork right along New Road to the railway station, passing on their left the Castle Precincts, containing the County Hall with the Prison in the background, and the one remaining tower of the six belonging to the original Norman fortress, the others being destroyed after the surrender of Oxford to Cromwell's General Thomas Fairfax (himself a Cambridge man!) in 1646.

Farther still along New Road, in front of the Tower is the much older Castle Mound, probably raised as a final strong point of refuge in case the outer entrenchments were abandoned, having a separate water supply reached from a hexagonal chamber built into its interior. In the 18th century, however, there was no New Road, and until the restoration of the whole Castle Precincts in 1794 the Mound was separated

<sup>7</sup> Permission should first be sought from the Governor, H.M. Prison, Oxford.



from the Tower by a short cut made by the townsmen to Titmouse Lane, the Castle walls having been pulled down 'in four dayes's space in a whimsey' in 1652. So that the members of the Holy Club walking down Castle Street on their errands of mercy would turn right, about fifty yards past Bulwarks Lane (then commonly known as Bullocks Lane) into a widening road passing to the left of 'Castle Hill' after curling around St. George's Chapel, which was built on to the Tower. In St. George's Chapel the Wesley brothers held services for such prisoners as cared to attend, and also afforded them the opportunity of Holy Communion. The Norman crypt was not rediscovered until 1794, by which time the chapel itself had fallen into ruins.

St. George's Tower itself, however, is much as it has been for centuries. The massive masonry of the four walls have a distinct 'batter', a gradual inward slope achieved by reducing the thickness from over nine feet at the base to about four feet at the top in a series of 'steps' or ledges. There are three main floors, each about sixteen feet square. The ground floor is lit only by the rays struggling through the small arched doorway, and for purposes of security has no direct communication with the floors above. These are reached by a narrow circular staircase built up the side of the tower, originally bending into the thickness of the wall itself so as to make approach more difficult and dangerous. The two upper storeys reveal the use to which they had already been put for five hundred years in Wesley's day. They are lit only by a small window each on the south-west, these windows being heavily barred both inside and outside. In the flooring of the second storey there still remain iron staples, presumably to secure the chain stretched across the room, on to which the prisoners were shackled.

In St. George's Tower, and possibly in other old dungeons which may be seen in the Castle precincts, the malefactors from the whole county were immured. It was here that the Oxford Methodists expended their



greatest efforts for the bodies, the minds and the souls of the unfortunates of their day. Pastoral visits were paid by one or other of the Holy Club every day, prayers were read during the week, a sermon preached every Sunday, and once a month the Lord's Supper was administered. All this was with the approval of the Bishop and his chaplain, who had the spiritual care of any prisoners condemned to death—others apparently not being in need of spiritual help. The Wesleys were first urged to this work on 24th August, 1730, when William Morgan took them both to the Castle. Many mundane services were performed by the zealous students: letters were written; writing and reading were taught; books were provided; disputes were investigated—and often settled; financial problems were disentangled, deserving prisoners being assisted out of a 'Castle Stock' raised for the purpose; makeshift wills were drawn up for condemned men; an aftercare society was organized for those released.<sup>8</sup> Here on 6th March, 1738, John Wesley first began to follow out Peter Böhler's advice, 'Preach faith *till* you have it; and then, *because* you have it, you *will* preach faith'. His *Journal* records:

'I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. The first person to whom I offered salvation by faith alone was a prisoner under sentence of death. His name was Clifford.'

And here three weeks later, on the day of the execution, Wesley had the joy of hearing Clifford's eager words—'I am now ready to die. I know Christ has taken away my sins, and there is no more condemnation for me'. This was most certainly one of the landmarks in Wesley's own spiritual pilgrimage. Altogether the work at Oxford

<sup>8</sup> One of the released prisoners, Mr. Fox, was adopted so effectively by the Holy Club that his house became the meeting-place for the first Methodist Society of the 'town' as opposed to the 'gown'.



Castle was one carried out with imagination and zeal, and rewarded with lasting results.

The Methodist visitor who can command a car will wish to make a pilgrimage along the Botley Road, past the Castle, out to **South Leigh**, nine miles west of Oxford, through the charming old world village of Eynsham. For it was about South Leigh that Wesley wrote in 1771:

'I preached at South Lye. Here it was that I preached my first sermon, six-and-forty years ago. One man was in my present audience who heard it. Most of the rest are gone to their long home.'<sup>9</sup>

The researches of Dr. Richard P. Heitzenrater have shown that neither of Wesley's first two sermons was preached at South Leigh until 1727, over a year after his ordination. The manuscripts of both have been preserved, the first on Job 3:17, the second on Matt. 6:33. The second is much more characteristic. Imagination pictures the precise young don emerging into the tiny oak pulpit from the door in the wall behind the pillar, and reading in a level, unimpassioned voice:

'In the Sixth Chapter of Saint Matthew at the 33rd verse are These Words, Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God & his Righteousness, and All these Things shall be added unto you.'

For a quarter of an hour or so, after relating the words to their context, he developed his theme of what seeking the Kingdom meant, and what results followed from such seeking. As he turned over the last page he concluded:

'To which Adorable & ever-blessed Trinity, Three Persons & One God, be ascribed, as is most due, All Honour, Majesty & Dominion, both now & for evermore. Amen.'

It was a cool, calm, theological essay. Yet the theme was significant. From it Wesley never wavered for sixty-five years, and his last sermon, preached in a private house at Leatherhead, was from a similar text, 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found'.

The wonderful series of 14th and 15th century wall paintings

<sup>9</sup> Local tradition says that this 1771 sermon was preached in the home of the survivor, a man named Winter, and not in the church itself.



in South Leigh church, including those over Wesley's pulpit, which in themselves draw antiquaries from afar, were not visible in Wesley's day, having been discovered under the whitewash and carefully restored in 1873. But the old clock in its square frame, inscribed 'Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come', would greet Wesley just as it greets the modern pilgrim approaching the church. South Leigh also has a pleasing little Methodist 'Wesley Memorial Church'.

Two miles south-west of South Leigh is **Stanton Harcourt**, one of the showplaces of Oxfordshire, with its Devil's Quoits (three stones reputed to be memorials of a battle between the British and the Saxons), the old Manor given to the first of the noble line of Harcourts by William the Conqueror 'for services rendered', Pope's Tower (where Alexander Pope worked on his translation of Homer), and the interesting Norman church.

It has been suggested that for a few months in 1730 John Wesley was a curate here. Certainly it was in Stanton Harcourt church that on Sunday morning, 11th June, 1738, he preached his first Methodist manifesto, the famous sermon on Salvation by Faith, going on to preach it in the afternoon at Oxford as the official University sermon. It was the first after his 'evangelical conversion', the theme of his sermon having become a personal reality less than three weeks earlier.

John Gambold, Wesley's Oxford Methodist friend, had been installed into the living immediately after his ordination in 1733. He lived in the 'Parsonage House', at the left angle of the road leading up to the church. Originally this building was surrounded by a moat, and had a secret passage to the church. At one time in its history it was a pesthouse, and still claims three ghosts—a Grey Lady, a Cavalier, and a dog. Here it was that John Wesley came with Peter Böhler in February, 1738, to talk over with Gambold the meaning of saving faith. Here also Charles Wesley would come, as on Sunday, 6th July, 1740, when he recorded in his *Journal*—'Preached at Stanton-Harcourt in the morning, at Southleigh in the afternoon; then expounded blind Bartimeus at Mr. G[ambold]'s'. In this old parsonage Wesley's youngest sister Kezia often stayed, until her death in 1741. The following year Gambold resigned the living of Stanton Harcourt to become a Moravian, the fifth of the Oxford Methodists to follow this course, though the only one who died in this communion, as one of their bishops.



## LONDON—GENERAL HEADQUARTERS

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THE PILGRIM TO METHODIST SHRINES IN LONDON WILL almost certainly make first for Wesley's Chapel, the cathedral of British Methodism, opened by Wesley himself in 1778. Here is such a wealth of historical associations that even the 600-page *History* written by G. J. Stevenson in 1872 leaves very much unsaid, particularly as there have been considerable alterations and additions since, including the transformation of Wesley's House into a unique Methodist museum.

Wesley's Chapel, City Road, is most easily reached from Moorgate or Old Street Underground stations, though many 'buses serve the area. When Wesley began his ministry, this district was on the outskirts of the city, which stretched only from Hyde Park to Whitechapel, a strip about four miles long and a mile wide. Even with the associated City of Westminster, the Borough of Southwark, and the surrounding villages its population was under a million—against Norwich's 45,000 and Bristol's 40,000. In Wesley's day Moorgate was Bunhill Row. Walking north from the site of the future Underground station one would pass on the right three great open spaces, for the most part waste ground: Moorfields, bounded on the south along London Wall by Bethlehem Hospital, the famous 'Bedlam' for the insane; Middle Moorfields; and Upper Moorfields, almost coterminous with the present Finsbury Square. Could the modern traveller transport himself through time as well as through space to any Sunday during the summer of 1739 he might find himself jostled by huge crowds making for the latest form of public entertainment, a Methodist 'field-



preaching'. In April of that year George Whitefield had preached in Upper Moorfields with spectacular results, and at 6.45 a.m. on 17th June John Wesley also preached there to six or seven thousand people on 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters'—the first of many occasions, not only in that year but for forty years to come. As winter approached, however, he invited his open-air congregation to join him in the ruins of a building near the north-west corner of Upper Moorfields. This was the old Foundery in which the King's cannon had been cast until, in 1716, it was wrecked by an explosion. Buying and repairing the derelict Foundery, Wesley soon transformed it into the headquarters of London Methodism. It was equipped not only for preaching services and official gatherings such as Methodist Conferences (the first of which was held here in 1744) but to serve as day-school, almshouse, dispensary, publishing house, and home for Wesley and his preachers—a home, too, where Wesley's mother spent her last days.

As the pilgrim walks north from Finsbury Square up Tabernacle Street (Windmill Row in Wesley's time) the site of the Foundery is on the right between Worship Street and Bonhill Street. Continuing up Tabernacle Street, passing on the left a tablet commemorating the Foundery (on the rear of the former Epworth Press), we reach the burial-ground at the rear of Wesley's Chapel. The obelisk to Wesley's memory is to the right of the main gate. Just north of Wesley's Chapel formerly stood George Whitefield's first 'Tabernacle', from which the street received its name.

The entrance to Wesley's Chapel is in City Road, reached by returning along Tabernacle Street, then right down Epworth Street. On the left corner of Epworth Street until recently was located the Epworth Press. Originating in the band-room at the Foundery where Wesley sold his multitudinous publications, the



Book Room moved in turn from the Foundery to Wesley's Chapel, across the road to No. 14, City Road (which functioned as 'The Conference Office'), and thence to the huge premises at 25-35 City Road, which included the territory (No. 27) where Dr. Thomas Coke maintained his own publishing house. In 1969 the publishing headquarters of British Methodism was moved to Marylebone Road, thence to the Methodist Youth Department in Muswell Hill, and more recently to Wimbledon, of tennis fame. Most of the City Road building is now leased by the Methodist Church, but the basement still houses the Methodist Archives and Research Centre. Here may be found most of the connexional archives, and in the strong room are the treasured literary relics of the Wesleys, including the wonderful collection of John Wesley's shorthand diaries, the raw material for his famous *Journal*, as well as hundreds of his letters. Such amazing historical riches are accumulated here that it would be quite hopeless to attempt a summary. A few of the more interesting items are on display in the Museum here.

Turning right along City Road from Epworth Street we come to Wesley's House and Wesley's Chapel. Again it is impossible to furnish an adequate description of the treasures and associations of this historic shrine. It also seems unnecessary, for this is one of the places which the pilgrim will not dream of missing, and he will almost certainly wish to purchase one of the illustrated booklets available for sale in Wesley's House. Opened by John Wesley in 1778, 'the New Chapel' took over most of the functions of the old Foundery, which soon returned to its derelict state. Successive alterations have made Wesley's Chapel more commodious without destroying its original appearance. The sanctuary is rich in memorials to great names in Methodism: John and Charles Wesley, John Fletcher, Thomas Coke, Adam Clarke, and a host of



others. Fletcher's font, reading-desk, and study chair may be seen. The marble pillars were given at the centenary of Wesley's death in 1891 by Methodist Churches throughout the world, replacing the ship's masts presented to Wesley by George III, which may be seen in the lobby. Some wonderful stained glass windows draw our eyes. Perhaps the feature of chief interest is Wesley's own pulpit, while the lectern and some treasured old forms are relics of the Foundery. The tide of population has somewhat receded from what was in Wesley's later years the suburban 'New Chapel in City Road,' but many 'Friends of Wesley's Chapel' throughout the world have helped to maintain an effective Methodist witness here. In 1972, however, the building was declared unsafe, and huge sums are still needed to restore it, though repairs are being undertaken in faith, with the hope that sufficient money will be raised to incorporate both Wesley's Chapel and Wesley's House into a complex including archives, library, research centre, display and exhibition areas.

At the time of going to press sufficient money had been raised to begin repairs on the chapel, but far from enough to guarantee their completion, in spite of generous help from all over the world. It now seems almost impossible that the larger scheme can be undertaken, and the connexional archives themselves may be moved to Manchester.

The house adjoining on the south was completed after the chapel itself, and Wesley took up residence there in 1779 at the age of 76. In this house on 14th February, 1784, he held the momentous interview with Dr. Thomas Coke which led to Coke's being ordained as the first 'Superintendent' of American Methodism. Here Wesley in those early hours of prayer gained spiritual strength for his tremendous labours and responsibilities. In the bedroom he finished his earthly pilgrimage on 2nd March,



1791. Scores of intimate personal relics help us to recapture the neat little figure of the old man, as with quill pen he indites at his bureau or at the quaint reading-chair one of his thousands of straight-to-the-point letters to a host of correspondents, writing with one eye on the clock lest he be late for any of his full round of engagements. Or perhaps he sits reading by the flickering light of his study candle, though he must not remain up too late, for has he not an all-important appointment with God in that tiny prayer-room at 4 a.m.?

Across the road from Wesley's Chapel is the famous Nonconformist burial-ground of Bunhill Fields, where lie the remains of 100,000 Dissenters, including great names such as John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, Isaac Watts, and William Blake, while George Fox lay in the Quaker burial-ground beyond. To Bunhill Fields most Methodists come, however, to stand by the grave of the mother of the Wesleys, who died at the Foundery on 23rd July, 1742, and was buried by her son John by the side of the left-hand path, not far from Bunyan's tomb.<sup>1</sup> A large section of Bunhill Fields has now been converted into a much-frequented public garden, whose custodian is happy to show Susanna's grave, or those of others.

Turning right at the junction of City Road and Old Street we come to Pitfield Street about 300 yards along on the left, down which the first street on the left is called Charles Square, a street opening out into a tree-lined square surrounded for the most part by dilapidated Georgian houses, or twentieth century flats. This was a favourite preaching place of the early Methodists, Wesley preaching there as early as 1741, when an attempt was made to break up the gathering by driving an ox among the audience—though the ox did not

<sup>1</sup> The headstone has been frequently renewed, and on both that and the memorial to her in the forecourt of Wesley's Chapel the mistaken spelling of her name as 'Susannah' was long perpetuated. She herself used the form 'Susanna.'



prove co-operative. Whitefield also preached here, and the description of one of his audiences given by the *New Weekly Miscellany*, though unsympathetic, would fit most of these early gatherings :

‘His constant hearers are about two thousand—all of them the scum of the people, and consisting of near ten women to one man. Of the rest of the people, some are coming only to look on and satisfy their curiosity, and others are going off as soon as their curiosity is satisfied. Some are laughing, others swearing; some are selling gin, and others ballads. . . . Others are in a maze to see religion brought into such contempt and ridicule by men in gowns. The houses of the gentlemen living in the Square are filled with their acquaintances from the City, as though they had come to see bears and monkeys.’

In one of these houses towards the end of the century lived the well-known hymn-writer John Newton.

In Hoxton Square, off Old Street another 200 yards farther along, lived one of the most well-known and influential Methodist families in London, that of Thomas Marriott, a baker, and one of the earliest members of the Foundery, whose son William was one of Wesley’s executors. Here too was Methodism’s first theological institution, presided over by Jabez Bunting.

Continuing east along Old Street, and then half a mile south along Shoreditch High Street and Bishopsgate, we turn left into Spital Square, and then down a tiny opening on the right into Spital Yard. At the end is a three-storied house whose old bricks have been refaced. It bears a marker inscribed: ‘In this House Susanna Annesley, Mother of John Wesley, was born January 20th 1669’.<sup>2</sup> Here that famous Puritan, Dr. Samuel Annesley, lived after he had been ejected from the living of St. Giles Cripplegate and became the minister of the Meeting House in St. Helen’s Place. Susanna, we are told, was the 24th child of her mother and the 25th of her father. After purchase by the Methodist Church Susanna’s

<sup>2</sup> Although Spital Yard yields by far the best outward view of one of London’s finest old houses, for entrance the pilgrim must retrace his steps to Bishopsgate, turning left into Stothard Place between Nos. 290 and 292, and then left again to ‘Susanna Wesley House’.



childhood home was extensively renovated, and has served the church and the area in various capacities, including that of a Methodist Community Centre.

Spital Square is the heart of Spitalfields, the immigration centre of the Huguenot refugees fleeing from France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Here they established a flourishing silk-weaving industry, which has apparently not quite died out to this day. They built eleven chapels just east of Bishopsgate, and the chief of these became Methodist property in 1750. The easiest way to reach it is down Spital Square and Lamb Street, the first narrow turn to the left after crossing Commercial Road being Grey Eagle Street. Down here on the right, at the corner of Black Eagle Street, stood the old chapel, now a part of Truman's brewery, though the former window-spaces, filled in with grey brick, can still be distinguished. The famous French preacher Jacques Saurin was minister here 1700-1705. At Wesley's first covenant service in this building in 1755 about 1,800 people dedicated themselves, and when in 1768 there was a possibility of selling the building Wesley wrote:

'I doubt whether we should act wisely were we to give up the chapel in Spitalfields. We have no other preaching place in or near that populous quarter of the town; and a quarter which, upon one account, I prefer before almost any other; namely that the people, in general, are more simple and less confused by any other preachers.'

Later another Huguenot Chapel was acquired here, near Christ Church in Fournier Street, about a quarter of a mile farther south.

Returning to Bishopsgate and continuing south, on the left, about a quarter of a mile past Liverpool Street Station, hidden away down a narrow passage, stands Great St. Helen's church, one of the focal points of early Methodist preaching and persecution. Originally the church of a priory of Benedictine nuns, it has the unusual feature of a nave divided down the middle in order to separate the nuns from the parishioners, though the actual partition has now been removed. From the old carved oak pulpit John Wesley preached several times in



1738, until on 9th May (*before* the Aldersgate experience, be it noted), he recorded in his *Journal*:

‘I preached at Great St. Helen’s, to a very numerous congregation, on “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” My heart was now so enlarged to declare the love of God to all that were oppressed by the devil, that I did not wonder in the least when I was afterwards told, “Sir, you must preach here no more”.’

He was not invited again until 1790. Charles Wesley also preached here, and here George Whitefield preached his first sermon in London, in 1736, and also his last before leaving for Georgia in 1737.

Farther down Bishopsgate, along another entry on the left, at No. 24, a flight of steps below a bow-fronted leaded window leads to a suite of offices which was once the City of London Tavern. Purchased and adopted in 1839 to commemorate the centenary of the first Methodist Societies, it became for generations the headquarters of British Wesleyan Methodism, and particularly of its missionary enterprise. Here laboured many a President of Conference of the 19th century, men like Jabez Bunting, Robert Alder, Elijah Hoole, George Osborn, William Arthur, W. B. Boyce, G. T. Perks, L. H. Wiseman, and W. Morley Punshon.

\* \* \* \*

Taking our directions once more from Wesley’s Chapel we go west along Old Street, seeing on our right the peculiar stepped tower, surmounted by a square obelisk with fluted sides, of St. Luke’s church, built in 1732. Although the famous type-founder (and acquaintance of Wesley’s) William Caslon was buried here, it is more famous as ‘our parish church’ of Wesley’s *Journal*. The Methodists regularly communicated here in the early years of the revival, though Wesley does not appear to



have preached in the church until 1778.

Round the back of St. Luke's, down Ironmonger Row, is Radnor Street, where on the left will be found the lineal successor of the first Methodist Sunday School in London, closely linked with Wesley's Chapel since this particular site was secured in 1818.

Another quarter of a mile brings us to Goswell Road on the left, leading into Aldersgate Street. On our right down Goswell Road are the remains of the famous Charterhouse, originally a Carthusian monastery deriving its name from an oratory in Chartreuse, France. Sacked by Henry VIII, it became a private house until in 1611 its owner was empowered to turn it into an institution and school for eighty old men and forty boys—later increased to sixty. John Wesley was admitted as one of the scholars in 1714. He suffered severe privations because of bullying, for the seniors robbed the juniors. Between the ages of ten and fourteen he ate little else but bread, though he managed nevertheless to follow out his father's injunction that he should run round the large playground three times every morning. Throughout his life Wesley retained a very warm corner in his affections for the Charterhouse. The 1939-45 war added terrible damage to the ruins of past centuries, but rebuilding is well in hand to make this once more a worthy sanctuary for old gentlemen, though the school itself has been transferred to Godalming. The beautiful chapel over on the right from the gatehouse escaped complete destruction, and the tablet there to the memory of John Wesley remains unscathed. To enter the Charterhouse the pilgrim should turn right into Charterhouse Street, then take the gravel path across Charterhouse Square to the main entrance under the archway, whose panelled gate with its tiny wicket-gate comes from the 15th century.

Down Aldersgate Street, on the left, in the Barbican urban development to fill an area devastated by bombing, stands the restored St. Giles, Cripplegate, which has taken over the activities of St. Luke's. Here John Foxe, Martin Frobisher, and John Milton were buried; here Oliver Cromwell was married; from this church Susanna Wesley's father Samuel Annesley was ejected for Nonconformity in 1662; here John Wesley preached on at least two occasions.



Farther down on the left, just beyond Maidenhead Court, is the probable site of John Wesley's 'warmed heart', a tablet to that effect being placed on Barclays Bank, No. 28. The actual room was apparently in Hall House, which was almost on Aldersgate Street, though the entrance was from Nettleton Court (now built up) lower down the street. It seems a great pity that some slight uncertainty still exists about the actual site of this epochal experience, and that nothing tangible now remains of that little meeting-place in Aldersgate Street. Yet its abiding memorial is the Methodist Church throughout the world, and as we stand here we marvel with Charles Wesley:

'See how great a flame aspires  
Kindled by a spark of grace!'

And with him we breathe a silent prayer for a similar experience:

'Kindle a flame of sacred love  
On the mean altar of *my* heart!'

Happily there is now no doubt about the place where Charles Wesley himself was converted three days earlier than his brother, and where together they sang 'Where shall my wondering soul begin?' In the footsteps of John Wesley and the 'troop of friends' accompanying him at 10 p.m. on 24th May, 1738, we walk a hundred yards farther down Aldersgate Street, and cross the road to Little Britain, at the corner of which stands St. Botolph's without Aldersgate.<sup>3</sup> Five doors past Cross Key Court on the right, at No. 12, is the approximate site of the house of John Bray, the brazier who nursed Charles Wesley when he was so desperately ill that his hoped-for return to Georgia as a missionary had to be deferred and then cancelled. Not only did Bray nurse Charles' body back to health, but led him along the path of salvation. A plaque has been placed at the site by the City Corporation.

<sup>3</sup> In Little Britain Benjamin Franklin, as a boy of eighteen, lodged at 3s. 6d. a week when he first came to London seeking work.



A quarter of a mile due south of Little Britain is St. Paul's, which John Wesley had visited earlier that memorable day, when Dr. Croft's anthem 'Out of the deep have I called unto Thee' echoed his own heart's cry. In the years to follow he and the members of the Fetter Lane Society looked upon St. Paul's as their parish church, just as St. Luke's was for the Foundery Society. Here Wesley regularly took Holy Communion, and here he complained that 'a considerable part of the congregation are asleep, or talking or looking about, not minding a word the preacher says'.

On the right, just north of St. Paul's, is Newgate Street. Turning down here we see at the far end on the left, on the north wall of the Central Criminal Court, a marker which reads: 'Site of Newgate—demolished 1777'. Newgate prison was one of the main scenes of Methodist ministrations. John Wesley went to the condemned felons there three days after his return from Georgia in 1738. He preached there in September of that same year, and on 8th November he and his brother Charles accompanied a number of condemned men to Tyburn, where Charles preached to the crowd after the public execution. Although in 1742 they were refused admission to the prison, they managed to continue their ministrations to the criminals, and Wesley's Foundery schoolmaster Silas Told achieved fame because of this work, being immortalized in Hogarth's picture of the execution of Tom the Idle Apprentice. The condemned prisoners were carted down Newgate, past St. Sepulchre's, up Giltspur Street, across Smithfield to Cow Lane, and so to the foot of Holborn Hill, and along Holborn and Oxford Street to Tyburn. We will follow them part of the way.

Diagonally opposite the prison, at the west corner of Giltspur Street, stands St. Sepulchre's, the largest of the city churches. Partially destroyed in the Great Fire, it was rebuilt under Wren's direction. There is believed to have been a tunnel linking the crypt to the condemned cells in Newgate. At any rate on the eve of any execution the sexton tolled a handbell outside the cell, warning the men within of the short time left for repentance—the original handbell is



now in a glass case on the south wall of the church. Sightseers would sleep in the churchyard in order to be ready in good time for the excitement the following day. Wesley's missionary companion, Benjamin Ingham, preached here just before embarking for Georgia, as did on later occasions the two Wesley brothers. The church has another important American link in the memorial to Captain John Smith, buried here in 1631, after having been saved from execution by Princess Pocahontas to become the first Governor of Virginia.

At the far end of Giltspur Street, on the right-hand side of West Smithfield, is St. Bartholomew's the Great, a fine Norman church, and the oldest in London except for the Chapel of St. John in the Tower. Here John Wesley preached in 1738, and even in later years. In 1747 he preached a charity sermon to a church so packed and with crowds so massed about the entrances that he thought there would be too much disturbance to make it worth while, but 'all was still as soon as the service began'. The rector at the time, Richard Thomas Bateman, had been converted by Howell Harris, and was present at the Methodist Conferences of 1747 and 1748. Eventually the churchwardens complained to the bishop about the 'very plain and strong words' that Wesley spoke, and he was forbidden the pulpit—the last in London to be closed against him.

St. Bartholomew's the Great has many other claims to fame. Here Tyndale is said to have been ordained, here William Hogarth was baptized, here Benjamin Franklin set up his work in a printing-office in the Lady Chapel, and here David Livingstone worshipped. From the rectory windows over the 13th-century gatehouse, kings and princes have witnessed jousts and tournaments in neighbouring West Smithfield, where in later years men and women were burnt alive for their faith, and some were actually boiled to death. The last martyrs were executed here in 1611, as is commemorated by a tablet on the left, near the gateway to St. 'Bart's' Hospital, which is incidentally the oldest in London, founded in 1123.

Still following the former path of the condemned cart, we



leave West Smithfield by Smithfield Street (formerly Cow Lane) on the west, into Snow Hill—this almost circular tour gave the gaping multitudes plenty of opportunity to gloat over the misery or bravado of those about to die. Turning right along Holborn Viaduct we pass on the left the rebuilt City Temple, the famous Nonconformist preaching centre opened in 1874 for Dr. Joseph Parker, where for many years Dr. Leslie Weatherhead occupied the pulpit by permission of the Methodist Conference. Across Shoe Lane is St. Andrew's, famous as the living of Dr. Henry Sacheverell. Here John Wesley visited Sacheverell in 1720 in a fruitless attempt to secure a recommendation to Christ Church, his father (who had been ordained here in 1689) having assisted Sacheverell in his defence before the House of Lords in 1710. Both John Wesley and George Whitefield, and in the following century Charles Kingsley, preached from St. Andrew's pulpit.

Leaving the path of the trundling execution cart we pass down Shoe Lane, which divides the City Temple from St. Andrew's, into Fleet Street. Passing the offices of the *Methodist Recorder* on the right, we find a bewildering array of tiny courts, entries to a kind of rabbit warren which was typical of the city in Wesley's day. Bolt Court holds special interest for us. At No. 8 lived Dr. Samuel Johnson from 1776 till his death in 1784, and here John Wesley dined with him when Johnson was 'sinking into the grave by a gentle decay'. Charles Wesley also dined here, as did the Wesleys' sister Martha Hall. When Mrs. Hall, an intimate friend of Johnson, presented him in 1776 with a copy of Wesley's commentary upon the Bible, he wrote a well-known letter to Wesley, thanking him not only for the *Notes*, but for 'the addition of your important suffrage to my argument on the American question'. (It will be remembered that in those stormy days of the Boston Tea Party Wesley had used Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny* as the basis of his own *Calm Address to our American Colonies*.)

Imagination must supply the lack of Johnson's Bolt Court house, which has been demolished, but another of his many homes was in Gough Square, just behind Bolt Court, where he completed his famous *Dictionary*. This is well worth a visit, for it is now established as a museum, with the original fittings and a unique collection of Johnsoniana. Johnson apparently came to Gough Square partly to be near his (and Wesley's)



printer, William Strahan, whose business was in New Street Square.<sup>4</sup>

Farther along Fleet Street is Johnson's Court, where Johnson lived at No. 7—though the court was so called before his residence there. Here also Charles Wesley visited his uncle Matthew Wesley, a surgeon, shortly before his death in 1737.

A little farther still along Fleet Street is Fetter Lane, where from September 1738 there met the society formed on May 1st by John Wesley and Peter Böhler at James Hutton's house in Little Wild Street. Here Wesley learned much of the organizing of religious societies, experience which was to stand him in good stead when in 1740 he and others withdrew to the Foundery, leaving the Fetter Lane group to develop along Moravian lines in a chapel which stood about halfway down Fetter Lane on the right. This building was destroyed in the blitz, and the Moravian headquarters in London have been moved to Muswell Hill, where the precious archives include a very important series of letters from John and Charles Wesley to James Hutton.

Continuing along Fleet Street, past the Courts of Justice, around St. Clement Danes, and along Aldwych into Kingsway on the right, we come to 'Theatreland'. In Wesley's day Drury Lane—the next spoke radiating from the hub of Aldwych—was famous as the haunt of vicious characters, to whom he began preaching in 1740 in an upper room in Short's Gardens, which runs west of Drury Lane to Seven Dials. It was in this same area that Wesley and Böhler organized the first experimental Methodist-Moravian Society in the bookshop home of James Hutton, under the sign of the 'Bible and Sun' in Little Wild Street.<sup>5</sup> A little farther up Kingsway on the left is the Kingsway Hall, founded in 1912 as the headquarters of the West London Mission. Apart from its modern fame as the centre for the scholarly and courageous evangelism of Dr. Donald Soper, the mission holds memories of great men of the past, particularly Hugh Price Hughes and Mark Guy Pearse. As the lineal successor of Wesley's first chapel in the West End, the Kingsway Hall owns the silver Huguenot sacrament vessels which came into Wesley's hands when he took over the Huguenot Chapel in West Street in 1743.

<sup>4</sup> Strahan was also a personal friend of Benjamin Franklin.

<sup>5</sup> Now Wild Court, the third street on the left along Kingsway.



To West Street Chapel, about half a mile west of Kingsway, we now make pilgrimage, along Great Queen Street and Long Acre, turning right up St. Martin's Lane, past St. Martin's Theatre and the Ambassador's Theatre to No. 26 West Street. The large arched windows on the right here mark the first consecrated building to belong to Methodism. Thousands of London Methodists here took Holy Communion in relays from those old silver vessels reverently handled by John and Charles Wesley and now preserved at the Kingsway Hall, and listened to sermons preached by the Wesleys, George Whitefield and John Fletcher. While many Methodists attended their parish churches for Holy Communion, here they could partake together at the hands of their own beloved ministers, without incurring ecclesiastical censure. And although other consecrated buildings were occasionally loaned or sold by friendly Huguenot pastors or trustees, West Street remained *par excellence* 'The Chapel' to the first generation of Methodists. A tablet draws the attention of the rare passer-by to this the oldest building of London Methodism. West Street Chapel has now passed into the hands of the rector and officials of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, who have reluctantly felt compelled to rent it for commercial purposes.

St. Giles's itself (about 200 yards north of West Street, approached *via* Cambridge Circus and New Compton Street) brings us back to the Tyburn procession, which halted here while a glass of wine was brought out to the criminals. The church had been opened in 1734, Wesley preaching there shortly afterwards before going out to Georgia. On his return he accompanied his brother Charles along the road to Tyburn, and made the customary halt at St. Giles's. Early in 1739 the pulpit here was forbidden him, and he wrote 'I am content to preach here no more'.

Past St. Giles's, along High Street, we reach the corner of New Oxford Street, Oxford Street, and Tottenham Court Road, and pause awhile. A short way up Tottenham Court Road on the right is Great Russell Street, along which stands



the British Museum, of which Wesley said, 'What account will a man give to the Judge of the quick and dead for a life spent in collecting all these!'—not knowing that one day some of his own would join the 'curious manuscripts' therein. These include a very interesting series of letters to a budding poetess, as well as some manuscript poems of his elder brother Samuel and much manuscript material of his musical nephew Samuel. In the British Museum also is preserved that strangely moving manuscript account of Wesley's broken romance with Grace Murray.

Farther along Tottenham Court Road on the left stood Whitefield's Tabernacle, where in 1770 Wesley preached Whitefield's funeral sermon, repeating it in the evening at the Tabernacle in Moorfields. Among the relics rescued, when most of the building was destroyed during the blitz, is the original pulpit—into which Whitefield is reputed to have grown too stout to enter, so that he said that he must cease attacking Anglicans who had grown fat on pluralities.

Two miles north-east, half a mile north of the Angel (taking a No. 19 'bus from Bloomsbury Way) is St. Mary's parish church, Islington, the scene of one of the most concentrated efforts of early Methodist evangelism. The Rev. George Stonehouse became vicar here in 1738, and in May of that year he opened his house and pulpit to the Wesleys. Wesley preached there once a month that winter, and Stonehouse apparently considered employing Charles Wesley as his curate. His vestry protested, however, so that eventually he signed an agreement 'to refuse the granting his pulpit to Mr. John Wesley, Mr. Charles Wesley, and Mr. George Whitefield'. Barred from the church, Wesley preached in the vicarage, and then, he says, 'the house being too small for the company, I stood in the garden'. At Islington on 5th January, 1739, he held one of the earliest conferences of Methodist leaders, and here on the ensuing 27th April George Whitefield preached his first open-air sermon in London, Charles Wesley being one of his congregation. Although the church itself has gone, what would appear



to be Whitefield's tombstone pulpit still remains in the churchyard, at the south-east corner of which is what we believe to be the old vicarage and its now tiny garden. In spite of the rebellion against Stonehouse, St. Mary's, Islington, has now been regarded for over a century as the Cathedral of Evangelicalism.

Continuing north along Upper Street less than a mile we come to Highbury Place. Here at No. 25 was one of Wesley's favourite havens of retreat from 1784 onwards, the home of John Horton, a member of the Common Council of the City, whom in 1780 Wesley had married to the eldest daughter of Henry Durbin of Bristol. A few days before Wesley's death he dined here, and Horton was one of his executors.<sup>6</sup>

After our excursion north, we return to Oxford Street, and 'Go West' (as the Elizabethans termed this trail of the condemned) to Tyburn, the great tripod gallows standing near what is now the Marble Arch, markers on the railings of Hyde Park and in the roadway showing the site. Tyburn executions were normally reserved for prisoners of some standing, among whom were Cromwell, Ireton, and Bradshaw, whose bodies were torn from their graves in Westminster Abbey, and men like Claude Duval and Jack Sheppard, Earl Ferrers (to the horror of his Methodist kinsfolk) and Dr. Dodd (sustained by the spiritual comfort of Wesley and his followers). The last Tyburn execution took place in 1783. On one occasion when Charles Wesley accompanied ten criminals to Tyburn and 'spoke a few suitable words to the crowd' he said that 'that hour under the gallows was the most blessed hour of my life'.

Retracing our steps along Oxford Street for about half a mile we turn left up James Street, which leads us into Marylebone High Street, an area full of Charles Wesley interest. During the first thirty years of Charles Wesley's married life Bristol was his headquarters, but from 1771 until his death in 1788 the family lived at No. 1 Chesterfield Street, Marylebone, then a growing village on the outskirts of the city. Here were held those series of

<sup>6</sup> A tablet on the front commemorates the fact that this same house later became Joseph Chamberlain's boyhood home.



subscription concerts arranged year after year by Charles Wesley in conjunction with his two musical sons. The concerts were attended for the most part by the nobility, as well as by celebrities like Dr. Samuel Johnson, somewhat to the alarm of the rank-and-file Methodists, while even John Wesley was constrained to say, 'I was a little out of my element among lords and ladies. I love plain music and plain company best.' Here also Charles Wesley penned and found the answer to his last prayerful verses :

'In age and feebleness extreme,  
Who shall a helpless worm redeem?  
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,  
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;  
O could I catch a smile from Thee,  
And drop into eternity !'

Unfortunately the four-storied house itself has long disappeared, and the site has been largely overlooked, but a tablet on the King's Head marks the London home of the world's greatest hymn-writer. It is reached by turning right off Marylebone High Street into New Cavendish Street, left into Marylebone Street, and right into Wheatley Street (formerly Great Chesterfield Street), the site being on the left between Wesley Street and Westmoreland Street.

Not far away, on the left of Marylebone High Street near Marylebone Road, is the parish church in whose graveyard Charles Wesley, by his own request, was laid. Though he did not appear to realize the fact, in 1688 his parents had been married in this little church.<sup>7</sup> Here were buried Charles Wesley's widow, aged 96, and their two sons Charles and Samuel, Charles having been organist of the church for many years. Their memorials are still to be seen, but the old church itself has had to be

<sup>7</sup> Its most famous wedding was that of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett from nearby Wimpole Street.



pulled down. The bared foundations are preserved in gardens which incorporate the obelisk and tablet to the memory of Charles Wesley and his family.

Along Marylebone Road to the left, almost opposite Madame Tussaud's, stands the magnificent Methodist Mission House, the worthy centre for the world-wide family looking to British Methodism as their mother church.

From Marylebone we turn to Westminster, a little over two miles farther south, a variety of interesting routes being available. Possibly we shall manage to look in at the National Portrait Gallery in Trafalgar Square, adjoining the National Gallery. The most well-known of the Wesley portraits here is by Romney (not his original) but perhaps even better is the 'preaching portrait' by Nathaniel Hone, R.A., and we should also see the life-size marble bust of Wesley by that great sculptor, Roubiliac.

To most people Westminster stands for the Houses of Parliament and the Abbey, and to the Abbey at any rate lovers of Methodism should turn in the footsteps of their founder. Though Wesley spoke disparagingly of its 'heaps of unmeaning stone and marble' he did admire the wonderful tomb of Joseph Nightingale by Roubiliac off the north transept, and said 'the marble seems to speak, and the statues appear only not alive'.<sup>8</sup> On the south of the south aisle is the lovely memorial by Adams-Acton to the Wesleys themselves, and halfway along the south cloister is a memorial stone to the children of their elder brother Samuel. Charles had been a scholar at Westminster School, so that it seems fitting that to him rather than to John fell the honour of briefly proclaiming the message of Methodism in this shrine of the nation's great dead. On 3rd September, 1738, Charles records that he 'preached salvation by faith at Westminster Abbey'.

A walk along the east cloister of the Abbey brings us into

<sup>8</sup> Nightingale's wife was the eldest sister of the Countess of Huntingdon.



Little Dean's Yard, the building with the inscribed gateway facing us being the 'Big School' itself, formerly a part of the monks' dormitory. In Wesley's day it was divided into upper and lower schools by a curtain hung from an iron bar across the centre—over which on Shrove Tuesday the traditional pancake is still flung to be scrambled for by the scholars. Although the famous hammerbeam roof was destroyed during the blitz, the bar itself has survived. Samuel Wesley junior was master at Westminster from 1716-1734, one of his most promising pupils being his youngest brother Charles, a scholar there from 1716 until as Captain of the School in 1726 he gained one of the studentships to Christ Church, Oxford.

Famous names of former scholars were already held in high regard—Ben Jonson, William Camden, George Herbert, Dryden, Prior, Locke, Sir Henry Vane the Governor of Massachusetts, and Hakluyt the traveller. Others were to follow—Cowper, Toplady, Gibbon, Warren Hastings, Southey, Froude, and Arthur Middleton, a signatory of the Declaration of Independence. Among Charles Wesley's schoolfellows was William Murray, later 1st Earl of Mansfield and a famous Lord Chief Justice.

The King's Scholars of Westminster School—forty out of about 400 pupils, of whom Charles Wesley like his eldest brother before him was one—lived in the old dormitory, formerly the monks' granary, in Dean's Yard. Here the annual Latin play was acted, with which all the Wesley brothers were from time to time connected, Samuel writing an epilogue, Charles speaking a prologue, and John being a privileged spectator. About the time that Samuel Wesley left Westminster for Tiverton, there was opened in Little Dean's Yard the new dormitory, designed by Christopher Wren, himself an old Westminster. Samuel Wesley lived in Dean's Yard, where he and his wife 'Nutty' took in boarders. One of their close neighbours was the Rev. John Hutton of College Street, whose son James was so prominent in early Methodism and later in Moravianism. Samuel Wesley was one of the founders of the nearby Westminster Hospital.

Ashburnham House on the north of Little Dean's Yard and now part of the school, designed by Inigo Jones on old



foundations, was in Wesley's day a private house haunted by the shades of Samuel Pepys.

Emerging from Dean's Yard by the archway south of the Abbey, another of Westminster's historic buildings faces us. This is the Westminster Central Hall, opened in 1912 as the crowning achievement of the Million Guineas or Twentieth Century Fund. The bound volumes containing the names of all the subscribers may still be inspected there. It is not only the Methodist Church of Westminster, but the administrative headquarters of British Methodism. By special trust the premises can also be used to house great public meetings. In that capacity the Hall has welcomed world-wide gatherings of many kinds, perhaps most well known being the inaugural meetings of the United Nations. In the Wesley Club here hangs one of the beautiful portraits of John Wesley by Mr. Frank O. Salisbury. As under the ministry of Dr. W. E. Sangster and his predecessors, the Hall continues to be a popular preaching centre.

The small church to the north of the Abbey is St. Margaret's, the parish church of the House of Commons; its front pew always set apart for the Speaker. Here is supposed to lie the body of Sir Walter Raleigh. And here Charles Wesley and George Whitefield preached from the pulpit once occupied by Latimer.

If at all possible the Methodist pilgrim should visit the Moravian Cemetery at **Chelsea**, a little over two miles west of Westminster. Alighting at Beaufort Street from a No. 11 'bus, a few yards farther along on the left, in the angle between Milman's Street and King's Road, will be found No. 381, 'Moravian Close'.<sup>9</sup> Here, behind an unpromising exterior, is a quiet shrine where rest many of the saints of the 18th century revival. They include Peter Böhler, so important an influence in the spiritual awakening of the Wesley brothers, and John

<sup>9</sup> The property is leased to a private individual, so that there is no public right of access, although Mr. Gillick (Tel. Flaxman 6454) was most co-operative.



Cennick, one of the first lay preachers, and a hymn-writer whose Graces are still sung at almost every public meal of British Methodism. They sleep their long sleep in a historic garden where formerly walked Sir Thomas More with Holbein, Erasmus, and Henry VIII and others of the famous guests to More's Chelsea home. The house itself (on the right) has now disappeared. The 17th century house on the left, ascribed to Sir Christopher Wren, was adapted in the middle of the 18th century as a chapel for Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians, and was later turned into private houses and studios. The burial-ground itself, over which flowering grasses whisper in summertime, is divided in Moravian fashion into four plots: for married men, single men, married women, and single women. The gravestones are flat, and on account of the expense of maintenance only a few of them are partly cleared of grass. In the married men's plot lie some of Wesley's closest friends:

'John Cennick/Departed July 4th 1755/aged 36 years.'

'Petrus Boehler/A Bishop of the/Unitas Fratrum/ Departed/27th April 1775/in the 63rd Year/of his age.'

'James Hutton/born Sept. 14th, 1715,/departed this Life/May 3d, 1795.'

Nearby in Cheyne Walk (Nos. 96-100) are the houses which were formerly one building bought and adapted by Count Zinzendorf in 1752 for Moravian purposes, known then as Lindsey House.

Attractively situated about twenty miles south of London is **Leatherhead**. Here John Wesley preached his last sermon, on 23rd February, 1791, in Kingston House, to a group of friends and neighbours of his host Mr. Belston. A tablet on the Council offices marks the site.



## BRISTOL AND THE WEST

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WHEN JOHN WESLEY FIRST RODE INTO BRISTOL ONE Saturday evening towards the end of March, 1739, he emerged with his weary horse from the forest of Kingswood to see nestling snugly among gentle hills a city of fewer than 40,000 inhabitants—a city of masts, and steeples, and great conical glass-factories. Though computed to be about one-tenth the size of London, it had about one-seventh the amount of London's trade, and indeed was the third largest city in the kingdom. Its importance in the growth of Methodism can hardly be over-estimated. During a ministry which entailed constant travel John Wesley spent more time here than in any other place except London, the equivalent of over six years, usually in spells of a week or a fortnight at a time. Between 1749 and 1771 it was the home and headquarters of his brother Charles. Many of the characteristic features and figures of Methodism originated here, and Bristol proved the natural starting-point for Methodist preaching, not only in the West of England, but also in the Western hemisphere.

The modern traveller will almost certainly approach Bristol from Temple Meads Station, on the south-east of the city, along a road which Wesley often travelled, though in his day there really were meadows surrounding the famous old Temple Church. Turning right through Temple Gate (where the road was only seven feet wide in 1739), and then right again along Temple Way, a bomb-gap on the left enables us to see the leaning tower of Temple Church, apparently, though not actually, little the worse for wear and war. It was here that Charles Wesley and his Kingswood converts were repelled from the Lord's Table in the early days of the revival. With the coming of an old Kingswood School scholar and master as vicar in 1779 some atonement was made, for Joseph



Easterbrook not only welcomed John Wesley as a preacher, but also followed Methodist example by himself preaching in every house in his parish.

Since the first edition of this book was prepared many changes have taken place in Bristol. The city fathers have seen the problems caused by severe bomb damage and decay as opportunities to reconstruct not only the inner city but areas which in Wesley's day were outside the city boundaries. Gone are the brickfields off Cheese Lane to the right of Temple Way, where at 4.0 p.m. on April 2nd, 1739, John Wesley began what the *Cambridge Modern History* called 'a new era in the religious history of England,' when he 'submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.' This was the beginning of his 'field-preaching' in Britain, whereby he was able to reach people with his message even when church pulpits were closed to him. For his text on that memorable occasion Wesley took the words quoted by Jesus, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.'

Gone also are other reminders of Bristol's religious past. As we continue north along Temple Way (turning right as we leave the station), we pass through an area reminiscent of Bristol's strong Quaker links. Over on our left after crossing Old Market Street and continuing down Bond Street is Quakers' Friars, with Pennsylvania Street and Penn Street. This area was the site of the orchard of a Dominican Priory, the 'old orchard' being a favourite preaching-place, not only of John Wesley, but of George Fox before him.

Even more to our purpose are the memories of George Whitefield. The way to Bristol had been prepared for Wesley by Whitefield, his former Oxford pupil and colleague, with whose sister, Mrs. Grenville, Wesley



lodged in Wine Street. Whitefield's father had been a Bristol merchant before he became landlord of the Bell Inn, Gloucester, where George was born in 1715, his mother also being a Bristolian. After Whitefield had persuaded John Wesley to begin his ministry in the open air here in Bristol he made the same venture in London and other parts of the kingdom. In Penn Street Whitefield built one of his handful of congregational churches with the title, 'The Tabernacle,' and in this building until recent years could be seen his living quarters—the study, sparsely furnished with horse-hair couch and chair and leather-topped table, the tiny bedroom, and 'Whitefield's Parlour,' where a tablet proclaimed:

'Rev. Geo. Whitefield, M.A.<sup>1</sup> lived in this house, 1760. In this parlour "The Missionary Society"<sup>2</sup> had its birth 1794. Also Bristol's first Sunday School, founded by Rev. Matthew Wilks 1800.'

Penn Street is now a busy shopping street, and Whitefield's Tabernacle is gone. His name is still kept alive, however, by George Whitefield Court, on the left of Bond Street. Through this we cross Penn Street (the site of the Tabernacle being on our left) into Broadmead. This is now the heart of the central shopping district for the reconstructed Bristol. Quakers' Friars is on our left. In the very heart of Broadmead, over on our right, is John Wesley's famous 'New Room in the Horsefair' (from which it was originally entered), now known as 'John Wesley's Chapel, Broadmead.' Standing outside we shall perhaps read the inscriptions on the gateway with some impatience, having caught a glimpse through the railings of the equestrian statue of John Wesley, of which a replica distinguishes the campus of Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C. In the background on the right we see the preachers' stable, where

<sup>1</sup> This should be 'B.A.'

<sup>2</sup> Later the London Missionary Society.



was carried out Wesley's injunction that every preacher must 'see with his own eyes his horse rubbed, fed, and bedded.'

Wesley set in hand the hasty building of this his first chapel early in 1739, during his first visit to Bristol, preaching in the shell on Sunday, 3rd June. It was built too hastily, however, and in 1748 was pulled down and rebuilt on an enlarged scale, only the side wall nearest to the Horsefair being left standing, to form the north end of the new chapel. This building was licensed for public worship at the Quarter Sessions on 17th October, 1748, under the provisions of the Toleration Act of 1689, which was intended to protect 'their Majesties' Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England'. It was the first Methodist building so to be licensed, since the Methodists did not reckon themselves Dissenters. In effect this was one of the first breaches with the Established Church, and Charles Wesley endorsed the document<sup>3</sup>—'I Protest against this needless useless senseless License'. Disputes over this same question of loyalty to the Anglican Church led to the disuse of the New Room not long after Wesley's death, when it came into the hands of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, from whom it was bought in 1929 by Mr. Edmund S. Lamplough. He had it carefully restored, under the skilled direction of Sir George H. Oatley, and presented it to the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

It is indeed a moving experience to enter this oldest Methodist chapel in the world and to find it in much its original state, and to sense in this bare simplicity the cloud of unseen witnesses, the rare aura of sanctity that clings to many a parish church but rarely to the younger temples of Methodism. Facing the visitor is the double-decker pulpit from which the Wesleys, John Fletcher, Thomas Coke, and a loyal sequence of Methodist preachers proclaimed the Gospel.<sup>4</sup> Below is the almost square communion table from which (in defiance of ecclesiastical law, it must be admitted) they administered

<sup>3</sup> Preserved in the Methodist Publishing House, London.

<sup>4</sup> The upper pulpit is actually a reconstruction, though this would never be realized by the uninitiated.



the Lord's Supper to hundreds at a time, and occasionally to over a thousand, so that the morning service was protracted far into the afternoon. Somewhere at the north end was the little room where Class Meetings arose in 1742 from Captain Foy's suggestion of groups of members subscribing 1d. a week towards the debt on the building—though Wesley soon saw their immense spiritual possibilities. Probably in the same room was held in 1745 the second Methodist Conference. Seventeen other Bristol Conferences followed in Wesley's lifetime, these later ones all being held in the premises as we now see them. They included momentous occasions such as that in August 1771, when a young ex-blacksmith of 26 offered himself for America. His name was Francis Asbury. The original old clock to the right of the preacher also has its link with America, for apparently Bristol Methodists sent over its fellow<sup>5</sup> to the first Methodist chapel in New York.

Perhaps of even greater fascination for many are the living quarters over the church, entered either from the north courtyard (where stands a lifesize bronze statue of Charles Wesley) or from the gallery. Through the lantern light John Wesley could on occasion observe the demeanour of his preachers in the pulpit below, while the preachers themselves, as will be observed, spent some of their time in scribbling with a diamond on the window-panes. At the bare deal dining table in the centre of the Common Room they would sit down to a frugal meal seasoned with rich Methodist fellowship.<sup>6</sup> The rooms around the Common Room are dedicated to leaders who had important connections with the chapel, and contain period furniture and miscellaneous relics, some items being of great historical interest. So far as is known, however, no room was actually associated with any

<sup>5</sup> Not an exact replica, as has been erroneously stated.

<sup>6</sup> The grandfather clock was not there at the time, though it is of real Methodist interest, having come from the Epworth rectory.



particular individual, except those in the far corner, which seem regularly to have been used by John Wesley himself as study and bedroom, the bedroom having a special desk slope fitted into the window for his use.

John Wesley's Chapel, Broadmead, is open to visitors from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. except on Wednesdays and Sundays. It also provides a centre of administration for the busy Bristol District of the Methodist Church. Not being in regular use for worship, however, except by the Welsh congregation, it has no assured source of income and is mainly dependent upon the generosity of visitors for its upkeep. These are invited to enrol as 'Friends of the New Room' and make annual contributions. Those who wish to study in greater detail the associations of this shrine would do well to scan the 'Historical Tablets' flanking the entrance, copies of which are also obtainable in pamphlet form.

There is a chance record in Wesley's *Journal* for 1745 that 'All our family were at St. James's, our parish church'. Throughout their Bristol ministry the Wesley brothers regarded St. James's as their spiritual home, and would accompany the New Room family there for Holy Communion whenever possible. In the footsteps of that family—preachers, housekeeper, schoolmaster, maids, children—we leave the New Room by the Horsefair exit, turn left, and then pass up St. James's Churchyard on the right, across Bond Street, and along St. James's Parade. Before entering the church, however, we turn left into the gardens which were formerly the churchyard, to see the memorial to Charles Wesley's children. St. James's itself provides a magnificent example of Norman work, proudly claiming to be the oldest church in Bristol, founded in 1129. The registers, dating from 1559, include some rather quaint records such as the christening on 17th August, 1752, of Charles Wesley's firstborn as 'John Wesley of Charles & of Sarah a Precher in the Horsfaier'.

Retracing our steps from St. James's we follow the route paced on thousands of occasions by Charles Wesley



between the New Room and his home. From St. James's Parade we turn into St. James's Barton on the left and up Barton Street. At the top two tall brick houses stand slightly back on the left, on the farther of which is a tablet announcing:

'Charles Wesley's House. Open to visitors, Mondays to Fridays 2.30 till 4.30 p.m. Other times by arrangement.'

In this home, consecrated by family prayer and a hymn of dedication on 1st September, 1749, all Charles Wesley's children were born. The firstborn died of smallpox, and Mrs. Charles Wesley herself was so ravaged by the same loathsome disease that when she finally recovered the nineteen years' difference of age between herself and her husband was no longer noticeable. Here the Methodist preachers loved to partake of Mrs. Wesley's hospitality; they would listen while she sang at the harpsichord from Handel's oratorios, and marvel at the playing of those infant prodigies, Charles and Samuel. And in this house—tradition says in the attic at the front—Charles Wesley senior composed many hundreds of his nearly seven thousand hymns.

Purchased and restored by the same benefactors as the New Room, Charles Wesley's house has been modernized in some respects, but the furnishings have been designed in the style of the middle 18th century, while the panelling of the hall and front room are original, as are the Adam-pattern grates in the front rooms. The adjoining house is occupied by the Chairman of the Bristol Methodist District.

From the eastern (Stokes Croft) end of Charles Street we turn left up King Square Avenue into King Square—the 'new square' of John Wesley's open-air preaching in the second half of the century. Here lived many prominent Methodists including, at No. 8, William Pine, Wesley's pro-American publisher. At the northern corner is a row of houses with a high terrace in front, the end of which proved an ideal site



for outdoor preaching. Wesley frequently used it in his later years, and his last recorded open-air sermon in Bristol was preached here on Sunday, 29th August, 1790, when he said that 'the hearts of the people bowed down before the Lord'. Another favourite open-air preaching site was at Baptist Mills, and the horse-block from which he preached was laid on the foundation stone of the Methodist Church at the corner of Mina Road and Lower Ashley Road, reached *via* City Road on the far side of Stokes Croft.

On the west of King Square is Dighton Street. At No. 6, the home of Dr. Castleman, occurred the epochal event of 2nd September, 1784, when John Wesley and the Rev. James Creighton set apart Dr. Thomas Coke as 'Superintendent' of the Methodist Societies in America. Coke then joined the other two in ordaining Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as presbyters or elders for American Methodism, a crucial step in the gradual separation of Methodism from the Church of England, and the prelude to the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. Although Castleman's house was completely destroyed during the war, the memorial tablet was saved, and is preserved at the New Room.

Another casualty of more recent years, closed in 1970 because of depopulation, was the chapel built in 1792 on Portland Heights, a mile northwest of Broadmead. Portland Chapel was apsidal in form, and contained an unusually large number of interesting memorials. On all sides were reminders of Captain Thomas Webb, a familiar figure to Methodists in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York before the War of American Independence. Announcing himself as 'Captain Thomas Webb, of the King's service, and also a soldier of the Cross and a spiritual son of John Wesley,' he would preach with his drawn sword laid across the open Bible. It was almost certainly Webb who brought the 'pressing call from our brethren in New York to come over and help them,' which led the British Conference of 1769 to



send over two preachers, followed in 1771 by Asbury and his companion. After playing an important part in consolidating the scattered American societies before the coming of Wesley's itinerant preachers, Webb was interned as a loyalist during the war, and after being exchanged for an American prisoner settled down in Bristol, becoming one of the founders of Portland Chapel. Beneath the communion table here was 'Captn Webb's Vault 1796,' where he and his wife Grace were buried. (She was the sister of Nathaniel Gilbert, pioneer of Methodism in the West Indies.) With the closure of Portland Chapel their remains were removed for re-interment at the New Room, Bristol, where also may be seen the window from Portland Chapel depicting the portly officer with the green patch over the eye which he lost in 1759, during the Battle of Montmorency.

From King Square we travel south to the City Centre, either by the more direct route down Colston Street, or if practicable by means of a detour along Park Row, turning left down Park Street shortly before we come to the University. On the right of Park Street is Great George Street, where if time permits we should visit No. 7, 'The Georgian House.' Here Wordsworth and Coleridge first met, and it has been fitted out by the Corporation with all the equipment of an eighteenth century merchant's mansion. At the foot of Park Street on the left is St. Mark's Chapel, founded about 1220 as a 'hospital' for the poor, and now the Lord Mayor's Chapel, unique in being the exclusive property of the city for its especial use. By invitation of the mayor John Wesley preached here in 1768, dining afterwards at the Mansion House: an attractive painting of the occasion hangs in the Bristol Art Gallery, beyond the University.

Across the way, on the southern side of College Green (where William Tyndale preached on several occasions) stands Bristol Cathedral. In the now ruined palace



behind occurred John Wesley's interview with Bishop Joseph Butler (author of the famous *Analogy of Religion*). Wesley refused to be sent about his business when the bishop asserted that he had no authority to preach in Bristol, declaring: 'My lord, my business on earth is to do what good I can. Wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay, so long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here; therefore, here I stay.' Long years afterwards Wesley's nephew Samuel was accepted as the organist of the cathedral where his uncle had been rejected as a preacher, and he is commemorated by a stained glass window.

East from the Cathedral is the City Centre, formerly St. Augustine's Quay on the river Frome, the harbour from which John and Sebastian Cabot set sail to discover America in 1497, a full year before Columbus. Here John Wesley preached to great crowds, where now stands a statue to Edmund Burke, M.P. for the city during the stormy days of the War of American Independence.

From the southeast corner of the City Centre we enter Queen's Square, the largest of Bristol's 18th century squares, and cross it diagonally by the new Redcliffe Way leading to St. Mary Redcliffe, the largest parish church in England, and architecturally one of the loveliest. Its most well-known associations are with Thomas Chatterton, the boy poet, who wrote his pseudo-ancient verses in the old manuscript books carelessly kept in the muniment room over the north porch. Among other associations, however, we may mention that in 1737, before embarking for Georgia, Whitefield preached his farewell sermon here to weeping crowds. John Wesley's nephew Samuel has associations with the organ, having opened it in 1828 after one of its many reconstructions.

Down Redcliffe Street we reach Bristol Bridge, in Wesley's time simply 'The Bridge', having no competitors. It was lined on each side with five-storied gabled houses and shops resplendent with painted signs, while across the middle was a chapel. In 1768 the bridge was rebuilt, and has since been widened several times. Just over the bridge on the left is Baldwin Street, with Nicholas Street behind it. Here in private houses met the two religious societies which later



merged in the New Room society, but all trace of them has disappeared.

North from the bridge, High Street leads us to the cross-roads where formerly stood the High Cross. On our right is Wine Street, completely destroyed in air-raids. Here it was that John Wesley came to lodge with Whitefield's sister, Mrs. Grevil, who kept a shop a few doors from the Old Dutch House on the corner of High Street—another bombing casualty. In Wine Street was born Robert Southey, Wesley's biographer, and probably at No. 11 Wesley met him. Here also in 1712 was born Silas Told, who after an adventurous early life achieved fame in London as a Methodist school-master and prison evangelist. At the far end of its continuation, Narrow Wine Street, lay Newgate, the Bristol prison which Wesley pointed out as a model for its London namesake. Its keeper, Abel Dagge, was one of the first-fruits of Whitefield's ministry. Separating Wine Street from Narrow Wine Street is Union Street, on the left. Behind the Odeon Cinema on the left of Union Street was the Bowling Green where Whitefield and Wesley used frequently to preach, an oasis in a network of narrow alleys. All Saints Street now runs across the site of the Bowling Green.

In Wesley's day the most depraved and generally neglected section of the population was the colliers who swarmed around the comparatively new coal mines three or four miles west of Bristol, in what was formerly the king's forest. Most of the game had long since disappeared, and much of the timber had been cut down for ships or coal workings. When the Wesleys came in 1739 there were over a hundred coalpits, whose colliers, squatting in rude huts in the woods, were looked upon as little better than animals, and wild animals at that, of whom law-abiding citizens went in dread. Whitefield was told that he need not travel to Georgia in search of heathen Red Indians to convert, since most of the Kingswood colliers were equally heathens. So to them he began preaching, describing how :

'the first discovering of their being affected was to see the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of their coal-pits. Hundreds and hundreds of them were soon brought under



deep conviction, which, as the event proved, ended in a sound and thorough conversion.'

Thus it was that Wesley found himself in a fruitful field ripe unto harvest—one which in some ways seemed more important than the city of Bristol itself. Certainly the pilgrim should not leave this area without attempting a brief visit to Kingswood.

Whitefield's 'first field pulpit' was a mound at the rear of the Rose Green Schools,<sup>7</sup> but if time is short the pilgrim may by-pass this, taking a No. 8 'bus to Blackhorse Road, nearly four miles east of the City Centre. A quarter of a mile farther along on the left is Park Road, formerly Tabernacle Lane, where still stands Whitefield's Kingswood Tabernacle, the old schoolroom bearing the inscription:

'This building was erected by George Whitefield, B.A., & John Cennick, A.D. 1741. It is Whitefield's first Tabernacle, the oldest existing memorial to his great share in the 18th Century Revival.'<sup>8</sup>

Down Blackhorse Road we take the left fork at the first opening on the right, Kennard Road, and 300 yards down on the left come to the site of Kingswood School, for which Whitefield laid the foundation-stone on 2nd April, 1739. The following 1st May John Wesley wrote:

'I went to ye Colliers in ye Middle of Kingswood, & prayed with ym (several being in tears) in a place formerly a Cock-pit; near which it was agreed to build ye School-house, being close to ye place where ye Stone was laid by our brother Whitefield.'

Six weeks later, on 14th June, John Cennick, a young man whom Wesley had engaged to teach in the school, and

<sup>7</sup> A Whitehall Road 'bus from the Old Market can be taken to Embassy Road, just past the school. A bronze tablet in the boys' playground states that 'This playground was used as a preaching site by George Whitefield & John Wesley'. Across Whitehall Road, down Chester Road, and across St. George's Park brings the pilgrim to Church Road, where the No. 8 'bus may be caught.

<sup>8</sup> The original size of the building is shown by four pillars in the school-room.



who was soon to achieve fame as a hymn-writer, yielded to persuasion and preached under a nearby sycamore tree.<sup>9</sup> In the school-house erected here all the Methodists of Kingswood were soon meeting. Towards the end of 1740 they held the first watchnight service of Methodism, as a counter-attraction to drunken revels on a Saturday night. Ten years later four schools were being run by Wesley here, including the most famous of all, the public school founded in 1748 upon very strict lines. After a century's growth this school was moved to new premises at Bath, and the Kingswood property was sold to Mary Carpenter, the well-known philanthropist commemorated in Bristol Cathedral, who converted them into one of the earliest Reformatory Schools. Gradually the buildings which Wesley had known disappeared, the last to go being the original school-house chapel. This was demolished in 1919, though some of its material was incorporated in a carpenter's shop on the same site, just to the left of the main gate.<sup>10</sup>

Yet something of Wesley still remains in the Kingswood Training School. On the right are the elms which probably he planted, while the area beyond is sometimes spoken of as 'John Wesley's Garden'. Under the chestnut tree on the left of the yard Wesley is said to have preached to the colliers. In the far lefthand corner hangs the old chapel-bell, and built into the corridor nearby is one of the several stones which have commemorated various stages of the school's history—this one added when the school was enlarged in 1822. Remains of the old pulpit from the chapel are now in Kingswood School, Bath. A pane of glass from it inscribed by John Wesley 'God is here: 1774', though supposedly in the Bristol Museum, seems to have disappeared.

From Kingswood School we make our pilgrimage to Hanham Mount, Wesley's first open-air preaching site in Kingswood, and one which has continued in use to the present day. Turning right down Britannia Road we come again

<sup>9</sup> This was many months before Bristol-born Thomas Maxfield was officially recognized as the first of Wesley's lay 'sons in the gospel'.

<sup>10</sup> Recent excavations uncovered the old foundations, and revealed the cracked chapel-bell.



into Blackhorse Road, which takes us due south for about half a mile to Hanham Road. Almost opposite the junction we ascend a narrow lane and take a rough track on our left. At the top of the little hill we find two apparently modern houses, though actually they are the augmented remains of one large house over two centuries old. In the front garden of the second house is a sycamore tree, a seedling from the original one under which Wesley preached—again following Whitefield's example—at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday, 8th April, 1739, to about 1,500 people, the first of many occasions. This led to a local phrase about 'the Sermon on the Mount', for not only the hill but the house are called 'The Mount.'

In recent years annual services have been held here on Wesley Day. Following the erection of a commemorative tablet in 1950, in 1951 the Kingswood Council also provided a worthy memorial. A replica of the pulpit from Wesley's demolished Kingswood Chapel has been made by the Kingswood Training School, and the site is crowned by a 65-foot high electric beacon, a striking symbol of the Divine Light shining from the Mount.

Less than three miles north of the City Centre is **Westbury-on-Trym**, whither Didsbury College for the training of Methodist ministers has been removed from Manchester, where it was founded in 1842. Here is to be found one of the major collections of early Methodist literature in the United Kingdom, almost complete runs of the *Watchman* newspaper and the *Methodist Recorder*, and one of the greatest treasures of Methodism—the portrait of John Wesley as a young man, by John Williams, R.A.

Thirty miles north of Bristol is **Gloucester**, birthplace of George Whitefield, though the Bell Hotel now retains no trace of its former illustrious occupant. The Grammar School of St. Mary-de-Crypt which he attended can still be seen, however, and also the pulpit of St. Mary-de-Crypt from which he preached his first sermon. Also at Gloucester is the half-timbered house in Southgate where Robert Raikes commenced his great work as the promoter of Sunday Schools.

Fifty miles west of Gloucester is **Brecon**, birthplace of Dr. Thomas Coke, the first Methodist bishop, whose father's shop in the main street opposite the Town Hall still exists. In the chapel of the Priory Church are marble monuments to the Coke family, including one to the Father of Methodist Missions, whose baptism is recorded in the register. Strangely



enough, it was from this same town that other pioneer Methodist preachers went to America, including Joseph Pilmoor and Richard Whatcoat, the third Methodist bishop.

**South Petherton**, where Coke was a curate of Methodist leanings, and from which he was driven in 1776 to the sound of the disdainful jangling of the church bells, is 40 miles south of Bristol, and rather off the beaten track.

**Cornwall**, whose borders are 100 miles south-west of Bristol, is full of Methodist shrines, for it was one of the main centres of the Wesleys' preaching, but we can do no more than mention three. Most famous is **Gwennap Pit** near Redruth, where Wesley preached almost annually to huge crowds estimated at about 20,000, though the more orderly assemblies which now gather every Whit Monday in the reconstructed pit do not reach anything like that number. The second place is **Baldhu**, almost halfway between Redruth and Truro. Here is buried one of the most well-known Methodist preachers of the early 19th century, Billy Bray, the 'King's Son'. To his memorial obelisk pilgrims from all countries come to do homage to one of the most quaint and lovable saints in the Methodist calendar, who replied to his critics that he was 'not a madman, but a gladman'. The granite chips around the memorial have thrice been cleared by souvenir-hunters. The third place is a rough stone cottage at **Trewint**, near Five Lanes (Altarnun) on the main Launceston-Bodmin Road. For almost fifty years John Wesley was a regular visitor here, two of the cottage's four rooms being built for his especial use by the householder, Digory Isbell, in imitation of the 'prophet's chamber' erected for Elisha. The cottage is now a permanent museum-shrine.

Mention should also be made of the birthplace of the Bible Christians, the branch of Methodism to which Billy Bray belonged. This was Lake Farm, **Shebbear**, in Devon, about 16 miles south of Barnstaple.

We have strayed, in thought at least, a long way from Bristol, and our closing paragraphs must deal with a Methodist centre much nearer at hand, the ancient city of **Bath**, 12 miles south-east of Bristol along a road familiar to the Wesleys. It was travelled also a hundred years ago by the staff and scholars of Kingswood School, as they took up their new home on Lansdown Hill, just north of the city. Precious relics here still speak of Wesley—the bed in which he slept, the gown which he wore, chairs which he used, the old Kingswood



pulpit from which he preached, and two fine portraits. Most important of all is 'Wesley's Library', the books which he provided for himself and his scholars, many of them annotated by his own hand.

From Kingswood School Lansdown Road leads us *via* Belvedere and Belmont into the centre of the city. Bath provides many magnificent examples of 18th century architecture, including the Circus, built almost certainly on the site where Wesley was preaching in the open air when Beau Nash, 'The King of Bath', unsuccessfully tried to warn him away. The Circus is down Bennett Street, to the right off Belmont. Down Gay Street and along George Street on the left we pass No. 4 Edgar Buildings (opposite the top of Milsom Street) where in 1790 lived the Countess of Huntingdon. She and her chaplain Whitefield had Calvinistic leanings which led in 1770 (the year of Whitefield's death) to their separation from Wesley and the Anglican Church, and the formation of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Past York Buildings we turn left again up the Vineyards, to find on our left the most interesting relic of early Methodism in Bath, the Countess's chapel, with the dwelling-house in front inscribed 'Here lived Selina Countess of Huntingdon B. 1707. D. 1791'. Tradition says that she had a private entrance into the rear of the chapel. At the bottom of the passage down the left of the building is a door leading into a lobby, behind which is a tiny room known as the 'Nicodemus Corner', where church dignitaries could listen in secret by means of a sound-tunnel (reminiscent of a leper's squint) to the possibly unorthodox preaching going on in the chapel. Certainly many famous preachers have proclaimed their message from that pulpit flanked by three gilded stone eagles and now surmounted by—not a Scriptural text but the words of a British king—'I wish I had a Lady Huntingdon in every Diocese in the Kingdom'. Nor were Church and State dignitaries usually afraid of being found in this fashionable church, and it was from this pulpit that in 1766 (a year after its opening) Horace Walpole and a host of the nobility heard John Wesley preach 'very ugly enthusiasm.'



## BIRMINGHAM—ASBURY'S TRAINING-GROUND

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JOHN WESLEY PASSED THROUGH BIRMINGHAM AS EARLY AS 1738, two months before his 'warmed heart' experience, but it was not until five years later that Methodist preaching commenced there. The first tiny society was formed by Charles Wesley on 26th June, 1743, and the early years were very hard going. When Charles Wesley preached in the Bull Ring the following February not only did the mob pelt him with stones and dirt from the cobbled streets, and with turnips from the gutter, but the bells of nearby St. Martin's were set ringing to drown his voice. At the time Birmingham was a market-town of about 25,000 inhabitants. It increased threefold during the following fifty years, but did not become the manufacturing and commercial capital of the Midlands until well on into the 19th century. Until St. Philip's Church (later the Cathedral) was built in 1715, there was only one parish church, and even in 1743 St. Philip's was still practically in the country, its tower (modelled on that of St. Paul's Cathedral) being an outstanding landmark visible for miles around.

During the early years of persecution the few staunch Methodist worshippers graduated from the open-air to a garret, and thence to a lowly lean-to building in Steel House Lane. About 1761 they hired a disused theatre off Moor Street, and to this playhouse-preachinghouse came Thomas Rankin in March, 1773, to receive his last instructions from Wesley before setting out as a missionary to America. Like most of the early Methodist buildings in Birmingham, this old preachinghouse has disappeared. Its site was at the junction of Albert Street and Fazeley Street.

With an expanding population a larger chapel was necessary, and in 1782 Wesley preached his last sermon in the



converted playhouse, on the following Sunday opening a new chapel in Cherry Street. This was quickly followed by one in Bradford Street in 1786 and another in Belmont Row in 1789. Of these only a rather decrepit Belmont Row now remains.

It is not in the almost fruitless search for early monuments of Methodism in Birmingham itself, however, that the pilgrim comes here, nor yet to see the monument of modern Methodism, the great Central Hall in Corporation Street, erected in 1903. Rather is it because Birmingham is the natural rail centre for the 'Black Country' generally, from which Francis Asbury went forth to become America's 'Prophet of the Long Road'.

Before dealing with Asbury, however, we should form some estimate of the hardy Methodism in which he was reared. Our best centre for this is **Wednesbury**, about eight miles north-east of Birmingham, and well served by 'buses from the city. When the Wesleys first came to Wednesbury it was a straggling village with an ancient though uneventful history, once more achieving some local importance on account of its scattered coalpits, aided by its recently-acquired market and the diversion of some of the Birmingham - Wolverhampton - Shrewsbury traffic along its formerly unfrequented and exceedingly treacherous thoroughfare.

John Eaton of Wednesbury records that he 'heard the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley, in the latter End of the Year 1742, preach Salvation by Faith, in the Colepit Field'. The scene of this first Methodist sermon in Staffordshire was better known as 'The Hollow', a large natural amphitheatre on the right of the road leading down from Hill Top to the bridge over the Tame which marks the boundary between West Bromwich and Wednesbury. The Hollow long remained the centre of Wednesbury Methodism, surrounded by the homes of leaders like John Sheldon, Francis Ward, and 'Honest Munchin', and others of lesser account. During the terrible anti-Methodist riots of 1743-4 their dwellings could easily be recognized by their windowless, battered appearance. The most vivid account of the persecution endured by our Methodist forebears



is to be found in a little pamphlet entitled *Modern Christianity exemplified at Wednesbury*, published in 1745 by John Wesley. Its effect is the more powerful since it presents the matter-of-fact testimonies of the sufferers themselves, a group of honest God-fearing folk who stood up to the brow-beating of sodden ruffians egged on by angry clergy and cowardly magistrates, Methodist attempts to invoke the protection of the law being unavailing. Yet shattered homes, looted furnishings and shopgoods, bruised and broken bodies, miscarriage and rape, were unable to shatter the childlike faith and indomitable courage of most of these Methodist martyrs, who refused to recant their beliefs or to pay the bribes demanded of them to secure immunity. They passed through the refining fire and came out as pure gold. Over a century later scraps of hacked furniture were being preserved by their descendants as precious relics. Probably the most well-known incident took place in October, 1743, when John Wesley, leaving Francis Ward's cottage<sup>1</sup> near the bridge, was contended for by opposing mobs from Darlaston and Walsall for five or six hours, being at last led back to safety by the converted ringleader, 'Honest Munchin', who said, 'Whoy, he's a mon of God, and God was on his side when so manny of us couldn't kill one man.'

Continuing along the main road we come into the Market Place, where stood until 1824 the Market Cross or Town Hall, a peculiar erection raised on six arched legs, where Wesley sometimes preached.

Just off the far right-hand corner of the Market Place as one approaches from West Bromwich is the Central Methodist Church, in Spring Head. Here is to be found a museum which houses many relics collected by the late Dr. Dingley, including Francis Ward's family Bible, in which John Wesley and George Whitefield are recorded as having baptized his children—Wesley on three occasions. Here also is 'Wesley's horseblock,' perhaps the best-known relic of Staffordshire Methodism, six brick steps leading to a worn stone platform. This was the scene of Wesley's first preaching here on the day of the great riot in October, 1743, as well as on many

<sup>1</sup> Woden House, 92 Bridge Street, now stands on the site, and into its fabric is built some of the original material.



later occasions. The steps originally led up to a door in nearby High Bullen, an eminence strategically sheltered by a malthouse wall, from which the speaker could command the attention of a large crowd.

From the Market Place we continue to the left along High Street, at the other end of which we come to High Bullen, a pleasant green circle and a street (turning sharply to the left) occupying the site of the former bull ring. Bull-baiting and cockfighting were the favourite pastimes of eighteenth century Wednesbury—if there were no Methodist preachers around. Just to the north is the ancient parish church of St. Bartholomew, erected on the site of the first Christian church, founded by Ethelfreda, daughter of King Alfred the Great. In the centre of the open area between High Bullen and the church, the local authorities have erected a large stone bearing a plaque portraying Wesley and announcing, 'Near this site Wesley preached his sermons.'

Across from High Street is Meeting Street. On the left, facing Lloyd Street, is the site of the first Methodist chapel, erected in 1760. It was a plain square building seating only 350 people, and was usually much too small for Wesley's visits. But to the devout local Methodists, whether of high estate or low, it was a little heaven. Here the Earl of Dartmouth would drive over from his seat at Sandwell Hall, seeking temporary relief from the anxieties caused by 'our American colonies' (for he was Colonial Secretary and Lord Privy Seal during the fateful years 1772-82) and would desire his Methodist tenants to call him simply 'Brother Dartmouth'. Here Richard Whatcoat, born at Quinton in Gloucestershire and apprenticed at nearby Darlaston, worshipped regularly. He had joined the Wednesbury society in 1758 at the age of 22, and soon became a class leader and a preacher. Eventually he entered the ministry, was ordained by John Wesley in 1784 for the American work, and in 1800 was



consecrated the third Methodist bishop in order to relieve the friend of his youth, Francis Asbury, whose health was failing. Apparently it was in this same tiny chapel that the two future bishops first met, when Asbury himself was a lad of fourteen. Both of them would almost certainly be present on 4th March, 1760, when John Wesley preached his first sermon there, for at this period Asbury and a handful of other youths were regularly coming over from West Bromwich to the 5 a.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday services at Wednesbury, in addition to attending All Saints' Church at West Bromwich in the later morning and afternoon. It is to West Bromwich, about three miles south-east of Wednesbury, that we must now turn from our meditations on the cradle of Staffordshire Methodism.

Mention should first be made, however, of **Bradley**, two miles west of Wednesbury, where Methodism began among the ironworkers in the 1760's. A great hindrance to their devotions was John Wilkinson, the famous ironmaster, a friend of James Watt and Matthew Boulton.<sup>2</sup> The softening of Wilkinson's heart was achieved not only by the ardent prayers of his Methodist workmen, but by an unknown visitor who put him on his mettle by inquiring whether it was possible for such a skilful ironfounder as he to make an iron pulpit. This he agreed to do before he discovered that his visitor was a Methodist preacher, Alexander Mather. He kept his promise, however, and in the end built a chapel also, including many iron fittings. The chapel has now been replaced, but the iron pulpit is still preserved at Bradley.

Eighteenth-century guidebooks mention the village of **West Bromwich** (if at all) as the birthplace of Walter Parsons, a giant retainer of James I. A hundred years earlier, somewhere around 1500, another of the yeomen of England had built a magnificent timbered house, revealing exquisite workmanship without and within. West Bromwich was then a great hamlet-surrounded common, and 'Oak House' was built on its southern

<sup>2</sup> Wesley visited Boulton's works at Soho, Birmingham, in 1774 and 1782.



boundary. Oak House is now a public museum,<sup>3</sup> and within its panelled walls the visitor will see the furnishings common in the manor houses of Wesley's England. He will also see in front of the house the courtyard where John Wesley preached in a keen north-east wind in 1774 and in a hailstorm in 1779, and possibly on other occasions.

Leaving Oak House we continue right along Oak Road to the Sandwell Town Centre, an enclosed area which incorporates the former Paradise Street. Here stood the West Bromwich Methodist 'Room,' bought, completed, and sparsely equipped by Francis Asbury's little 'Band' of young men in 1764. In this little chapel, twenty-four feet square, services were held each Sunday at 8.0 a.m. until the turn of the century, when a revival and increased numbers led to the building of a new chapel opposite—which has also disappeared. The new chapel was replaced in 1835 by the imposing Wesley Chapel in High Street, itself now demolished and replaced by more utilitarian buildings. It was that first tiny 'Room,' however, now no more, which knew the presence of the early Methodist saints: the Earl of Dartmouth, whose park-keeper at Sandwell for 47 years, James Bayley, was one of its founders; Thomas Ault, Parish Clerk for 25 years, and his brother Jabez, whose son William was one of the missionaries who sailed with Dr. Thomas Coke on his last pioneering voyage to Ceylon, and died there.

Turning right down High Street we come to No. 64, 'The Elms,' the home built for himself by one of the most prominent of the early Staffordshire Methodists, James Jones. He was one of Wesley's earliest full-time itinerant preachers, from 1743 (when he was involved in the Wednesbury riots) until 1749. In this latter year he became a sort of 'resident itinerant,' superintending the wide Staffordshire Circuit on behalf of Wesley for

<sup>3</sup> Open 10.0 to 4.0 summer (Sundays 2.30 to 5.0); 10.0 to 4.0 winter; Thursdays closed. Admission free. The traveller from Wednesbury reaches the Oak House by turning right from the High Street into Lodge Road, and then right again into Oak Road, the old house being fifty yards along on the left—a little over half a mile from the High Street.



at least ten years—a unique function for an early Methodist preacher. He was sufficiently well-to-do to keep a carriage, and there seems little doubt that in this roomy house built on semi-classical lines John Wesley was a familiar visitor.

Striking north for a mile and a half, up Bull Street and Hallam Street, on the right we come to Newton Road. On the corner of Newton Road stands All Saints' parish church, where Asbury and his comrades heard evangelical truths from the lips of clergy supported by the good Earl of Dartmouth, whose spacious grounds we have passed on the right, now converted into public parks and golf courses. The church itself has undergone much rebuilding since that time. Three-quarters of a mile along Newton Road, on the right after crossing the M5 expressway, is Forge Lane. Half a mile down, passing Forge Farm on the right, we come to Forge Mill Farm along a short lane on the left, a tiny group of buildings watered by an arm of the River Tame. At the puddling forge here lived Henry Foxall, a native of Monmouthshire, who came to West Bromwich shortly after the birth of his son Henry in 1758. In 1797 young Foxall and his family emigrated to America, settling in Georgetown, where his Columbia Foundry specialized in making ordnance. He became a prominent Methodist, entertained Bishop Asbury frequently, and built 'The Foundry Chapel' in Washington, D.C. The tradition begun by Frederick W. Briggs, however, that Asbury served his apprenticeship alongside Foxall, is disproved by their ages. Almost contemporary evidence exists to show that Asbury was bound apprentice as a 'chape filer' to John Griffin. This was a specialist craft which involved making fittings for sword scabbards, bucket-handles, belt-buckles, and similar hardware.

A little over a quarter of a mile to the south of Forge Mill Farm, reached by the next drive on the left, is Manwoods, an



attractive old farmhouse erected in 1680 by a great-uncle of Dr. Samuel Johnson. Its chief interest to Methodists is that in a cottage adjoining (now demolished) Asbury preached his first sermon, standing behind a chair. If time allows, the pilgrim could now continue another three quarters of a mile down the lane, coming to crossroads just after a forking road on the left. Passing through the ruined lodge gates on the right, a few hundred yards along the drive could be found the remains of Sandwell Hall, formerly the seat of the Earl of Dartmouth.

Returning to the fork passed earlier, the right lane leads into Silvercroft Avenue, and thus after a mile's journey into Friary Road, where Handsworth Theological College was opened in 1881 to train Methodist ministers. In recent years this has been incorporated in the ecumenical Queen's College in Somerset Road, Birmingham. The movable property of Handsworth was transferred either to Queen's or to the Methodist Archives in London. This included two letters by John Wesley, various busts, a fine oil painting of Asbury, a good copy of a portrait of the Earl of Dartmouth, and a native chief's club, swords, and spears, brought back from the Fiji Islands by the Rev. Thomas Williams, a pioneer Methodist missionary there from 1840 to 1853.

Continuing along Friary Road, and then turning to the left up Hamstead Hill, in a little over a mile we come to the place where in August 1745 Asbury was born. The house itself has long disappeared, but the site is just north of (and can be seen from) the humpbacked bridge over the railway lines near the Hamstead and Great Barr station. It is best reached by continuing over the bridge to a narrow road on the left (almost opposite the Beaufort Arms) which leads to the railway sidings. Just before turning right over the weigh-bridge the road passes over a narrow, evil-smelling stretch of water marking the old course of the River Tame. In the early 19th century, in order to make way for the new road, the river was diverted and Asbury's birthplace demolished. On the left, beneath the shrub-covered embankment and the railway sidings, enclosed by the 'river' and the railway, formerly stood the cottage where Asbury was born. His true boyhood home, however, was a little farther afield, for his parents left Hamstead Bridge shortly after his birth to live in Newton village, a mile and a half along the Hamstead Road, on the left arm of the next fork.



If the pilgrim wishes to omit Sandwell Hall, Handsworth College, and the unprepossessing site of Asbury's birth, he may arrive at the same point in Newton by returning from Forge Mill Farm to Newton Road, and turning right for about three-quarters of a mile.

About two hundred yards to the left of Hamstead Road corner (where formerly stood the Methodist Chapel built in 1808 after the death of Asbury's parents) will be seen 'Asbury Cottage,' opposite the Newton Garage. In 1959 this four-roomed cottage in which Francis Asbury spent most of his childhood was acquired and restored by the World Methodist Council and the Corporation of West Bromwich, by whom it is sympathetically maintained. It is solidly built with handmade bricks, and has been preserved as by a miracle in an area which has sacrificed so many precious relics of the past in its zeal for material progress. Carefully restored and appropriately furnished, it is relatively simple to imagine Asbury's devout mother as in later years he would picture her, 'by a large window, poring over a book for hours together.' We can imagine him also, following Elizabeth Asbury's studious example, 'prying into the Bible by twinkling firelight,' seated on one of the built-in wooden seats flanking the open hearth, until she would rebuke him with the words, 'Frank, you will spoil your eyes!' He was an apt scholar, reading his Bible at six years of age, and 'greatly delighting in the historical part of it.' His parents sent him to school at Snails Green, about a mile away along the road leading north from Great Barr to Walsall, paying a shilling a week for his tuition. His master here eventually so terrorized the little 'Methodist parson,' as he was already nicknamed, that at thirteen he was taken away and sent into service for a few unhappy months before being apprenticed to John Griffin. In Griffin's godly



home he 'was treated more like a son or an equal than an apprentice.' The Asbury Cottage itself was a centre for religious gatherings, and Mrs. Asbury saw to it that her son did not lack for spiritual guidance. She encouraged him to link up with the Methodist society in Wednesbury, whose devout enthusiasm stirred him greatly, and led to his conversion at the age of sixteen.

After some breaking-in by his mother at her fortnightly women's meetings, Francis himself began to conduct the services in his own home, and also in the home of his great friend Edward Hand of Sutton Coldfield. It is well known how from these humble beginnings he became a local preacher, as 'a youth not quite out of his 'teens, with a voice like the roaring of a lion' (as a contemporary expressed it). In 1766 he was accepted as an itinerant preacher, was admitted into 'Full Connexion' in 1768, and in 1771 offered himself for America. Yet in spite of his unique importance in American Methodism, particularly after his ordination in 1784, he never forgot his old Staffordshire haunts. He kept in constant and tender touch with his ageing parents, who were eventually laid to rest in the churchyard of Great Barr parish church—a mile and a half north of Great Barr itself.

On the way back into Birmingham it might be desirable to call in to see the Asbury Memorial Church in Soho Road, about a mile south of Handsworth College, though there is little of direct Asbury interest there, except the oil painting of him executed in the middle 19th century by Mr. W. E. Whitehouse and used as the frontispiece for F. W. Briggs's *Francis Asbury*.

**Madeley.** The inspiration of the saintly ministry of the Rev. John William Fletcher draws many pilgrims to Madeley, Shropshire, just over twenty miles (as the crow flies) northwest of West Bromwich. To Wesley he was perhaps most important as the chief literary defender of his doctrinal position that God seeks the salvation of all men, and also as his designated successor in charge of the Methodist societies after the death of himself and his brother Charles. He was also (to men



as different as Wesley and Voltaire) the most outstanding example of perfect Christian love. He deliberately chose a ministry in an area facing the problems of the Industrial Revolution, remaining as vicar of Madeley, the centre of pioneering iron and china industries, from 1760 until his death in 1785, shortly after he had married Mary Bosanquet, one of the few women preachers of early Methodism. His iron tomb may be seen in the churchyard, and a few mementoes of his ministry in the church itself, rebuilt in 1796. His seventeenth-century vicarage remains a place of pilgrimage, as it was to Wesley.

**Quinton.** Those who visit Stratford-on-Avon, about 23 miles south of Birmingham, might care to search out the village of Quinton, five miles farther south, in north-east Gloucestershire—not to be confused with the Quinton near Birmingham. From 1738 until his death in 1772 the vicar of Quinton was Samuel Taylor, who became a close friend of the Wesleys. He was present at their Conferences in 1744 and 1746, and they preached in the old Norman church here, now restored. Richard Whatcoat, the third Methodist bishop, as has been mentioned above, was born at Quinton, in 1736. He received his earliest religious impressions from Taylor's evangelical preaching.



## NEWCASTLE AND SOME NORTHERN SHRINES

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LIKE THE MAP-MAKERS WHO TOWARDS THE END OF Wesley's life divided the country into triangles for the purposes of the Ordnance Survey, Methodism had its triangulation points. The base of the elongated triangle was formed by London and Bristol, and its apex was Newcastle. These three centres became focal points for widening circles of evangelism, from which food and medicine for body, mind, and soul were dispensed. Each place provided a hostel for Wesley and his travelling preachers, a hostel complete with housekeeper and staff, and a well-stocked study.

One might well wonder, 'Why Newcastle?' Granted that Methodists must go to those who needed them most, why go farther north than Yorkshire? One reason may have been Newcastle's similarity to Bristol, with its glass-factories, its coal-mines, and its shipping—though with its 20,000 inhabitants Newcastle was only half the size of the western port. Wesley's visit to 'the colliers in the north' seems to have been suggested by the Countess of Huntingdon. In May 1742, John Wesley set out from Yorkshire with one of her protégés. They arrived at Newcastle on Friday the 26th. Wesley's first impressions were not very good :

'So much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing (even from the mouths of little children) do I never remember to have seen and heard before, in so small compass of time. Surely this place is ripe for Him who "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance".'

Yes, that was the point. Here indeed was a great need for the Gospel.

After careful reconnoitring, on the Sunday morning



Wesley walked down to Sandgate, on the quay side—‘the poorest and most contemptible part of the town’. Standing at the end of the street near an old pump he began to sing the hundredth Psalm. A crowd gathered, to whom he proclaimed, ‘He was wounded for our transgressions’. By the end of the sermon the gaping multitude numbered over a thousand, to whom he announced :

‘If you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God’s help, I design to preach here again.’

In the evening the hillside swarmed with greater numbers of people than he had seen even in London. They would not let him go without a promise to return. It was one of the most auspicious openings to an evangelistic mission. The City itself has commemorated the event by the erection of an inscribed granite obelisk and drinking fountain on the site, where to this day Methodist open-air services are held.

Charles Wesley followed up the attack in September, 1742, also preaching to huge crowds in Sandgate, and enrolling scores of members, so that in a few days the society grew to two hundred and fifty. There was no longer room for them to meet in his lodgings, so he hired an airless ‘Dancing-Room’, which witnessed scenes of violent persecution. Charles Wesley also broke fresh ground by preaching at the Newgate prison, the Keelmen’s Hospital, and in several neighbouring villages, Swalwell, Tanfield, Whickham, Ryton, and ‘Tames’. The Hospital in particular was a favourite preaching-centre, and he told them, ‘I had rather be the Keelmen’s Chaplain than the King’s’. The Novocastrians loved ‘so Canny a Creature’. Having promised to return to Yorkshire, Charles Wesley wrote in decided terms to his brother John, stating that he was leaving two preachers behind, and adding :



'Neither London nor Bristol will yield such a Harvest of Souls as the Rude Populous North.'

This settled the question for John Wesley. In December he was back again for a longer stay, and on the 20th laid the foundation-stone of what was to be his northern headquarters, not knowing how the building was to be completed. In strange providential ways, however, the money came in, as had the money for Professor Francke's Orphan House at Halle (and later George Muller's at Bristol), and perhaps it was partly with Francke in mind that Wesley dubbed the new building 'The Orphan House'. Actually it served almost every other purpose except that of an orphanage: preaching-house, society-room, hostel, library, bookshop, school. In later years, however, a thriving Sunday School was attached to it, and when in 1856 the old building was taken down it was replaced by the 'Orphan-house Wesleyan Schools.' This building also was demolished a century later, a plaque on No. 51 Northumberland Street marking the site.

Wesley was back again in February, 1743, making careful inquiry into the mushroom growth of his northern outpost. After purging the Society of fifty backsliders, there were still eight hundred members left. The need for discipline, however, led him to take a step which he had pondered for some time. He inaugurated strict rules of conduct for Methodists, and published them (price one penny) from the press of John Gooding on the Side, just south of the Cathedral. This famous Methodist manifesto, which remained in force until the present century, was entitled *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, King's-Wood, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.*

Even the panic of the '45 Rebellion, when Bonnie Prince Charlie seemed to be marching direct on a hastily-fortified Newcastle, did not hinder the work of the Orphan House, although it was outside the walls of the town, and seemed



likely to be a target for attackers and defenders alike. Loyal Methodists, encouraged by the presence of John Wesley, who had rushed north to be by their side, helped to stiffen their townsmen's morale for the danger which in the end passed them by.

Newcastle held sad recollections for Wesley, however. Here he had pledged his troth to Grace Murray, and set forth with her as his pillion companion through England and Ireland. But as the housekeeper at the Orphan House she had been attracted by one of his preachers, John Bennet, and they had been thrown together in the leisured intimacy occasioned by Bennet's illness. And here Charles Wesley, striving to save his brother from what he felt was an unworthy match, married Grace Murray off to Bennet. The register of St. Andrew's Church in Gallowgate, a few hundred yards to the west of Northumberland Street (on the left going outwards from the City Centre), contains the brief entry of their marriage on 3rd October, 1749. Though the register does not reveal this fact, both Charles Wesley and George Whitefield were present.

At the Orphan House was ordained Alexander Kilham, one of the two founders of the Methodist New Connexion. This was in 1792, shortly before the Conference put a ban on Methodist ordinations. Much of Kilham's pamphleteering in favour of Methodist reform was directed from the sturdy independent north.

Eventually the Orphan House became too constricted for Newcastle's thriving Methodism, even when daughter-circuits had taken over much of the responsibility for the surrounding area. In 1821 was opened Brunswick Chapel (also off Northumberland Street), the cathedral of northern Methodism. Brunswick took over much of the tradition as well as the activities of the Orphan House, and it now houses a most interesting museum of Methodist antiquities. Included in the museum is a portrait of William Smith, the Methodist corn-merchant who was one of Wesley's earliest Newcastle leaders, and who married his step-daughter Jane Vazeille. Strangely enough, the earthly remains of those who were the nearest



to being Wesley's children lie in the churchyard of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, where his hopes of earthly love had been buried at the marriage of Grace Murray.

From Newcastle Methodist preachers rode north to **Scotland**, though Methodism's system of itinerancy did not find a very congenial soil there. The oldest Methodist chapel in Scotland is to be found at **Dunbar**, thirty miles east of Edinburgh, the oldest surviving cause being at Aberdeen. Methodism was brought to Dunbar about 1755 by 'John Haime's dragoons,' and Wesley was a frequent visitor. Thomas Rankin, one of the pioneers of American Methodism, was born and converted here, and was one of the trustees of the old chapel. The pulpit and the stained glass windows are later additions, and came from St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh.

**Gateshead Fell**, just south across the Tyne, was called by Wesley 'the Kingswood of the North'. The chapel built here about 1754 was the first in the county of Durham, and adjoining it were two rooms for Wesley and his preachers. On the windows the preachers occasionally proclaimed the gospel with a diamond, and one of the panes is still preserved, inscribed 'God is Love. J. Wesley, 1771.'

**Sunderland**, also, had many important associations with early Methodism. Its great pride is Sans Street Chapel, opened in 1793 by Dr. Coke. Here is a replica of the fine portrait of John Wesley painted by Thomas Horsley during Wesley's last visit to the town in 1790.

Tyneside was a fruitful ground for other branches of Methodism, particularly the Primitive Methodists. Indeed, their local preachers played a most prominent part in the rise and redemption of the working classes. The many visits of Wesley and his preachers to the cathedral city of **Durham** have certainly yielded a rich harvest. It was one of Wesley's Durham friends, Miss Lewen, who in his later years eased the burden of his fatiguing journeys by the gift of a chaise.

For most southern Methodists, however, the Newcastle area was very difficult of access, and even Charles Wesley had reluctantly to give up his visits because the physical strain of the travel involved was too much for him. Gradually during the eighteenth century the West Riding



of Yorkshire became the hub of northern Methodism. No (Wesleyan) Methodist Conference was held at Newcastle until 1840, but as early as 1751 Leeds joined London and Bristol as a Conference centre, Manchester being added in 1765, and more regularly from 1787 onwards. We will now journey south and west towards the industrial heart of England, in the footsteps of Wesley.

**Yarm**, five miles south of Stockton-on-Tees, contains the oldest Methodist Octagon chapel in the world. Its Methodist history began with a visit by Wesley in 1748. The father of Yarm Methodism was George Merryweather, and his house, which still stands in the High Street, was Wesley's regular home. In the hayloft at the back the Methodists worshipped until the building of the Octagon in 1763, and this chapel has been in continuous use for Methodist worship ever since, apparently the second oldest Methodist building in the world so to be used. Yarm was indicated by Wesley in the *Minutes* of his Conferences as the model for all other octagonal chapels—an architectural style which for a time he greatly favoured.

The Methodist chapel at **Newbiggin** in Teesdale, over 30 miles west of Stockton, appears to be the oldest building in the world in continuous use for Methodist worship.

**Osmotherley**, about 15 miles south of Stockton, was visited by Wesley in 1745 at the request of a Roman Catholic priest. It was an important Methodist centre for generations, and the chapel built there in 1760 is one of the oldest in the world. Its Society Book contains fascinating records of expenses and other details from 1750 onwards.

**Pickering**, about 25 miles north-east of York, has several missionary links. Joseph Pilmoor and Richard Boardman are associated with the town, and from neighbouring farms George Piercy set sail for China and James Calvert to the Fiji Islands. At **Lastingham**, six miles north-west, was born William Warrener, who accompanied Dr. Coke to the West Indies in 1786.

At **York** itself there is little of outstanding Methodist interest still to be seen. Gone is the old chapel in Peaseholme Green, just south-west of the Minster, where in 1769 Joseph Pilmoor preached on his way out to America with Richard Boardman. Methodism's most important and imposing shrine now is the



Centenary Chapel in St. Saviourgate. Along St. Saviourgate is St. Saviour's Church, where Wesley preached in 1786.

**Leeds.** The house of William Shent, a barber, at the corner of Briggate and Duncan Street, was the centre of Leeds Methodism for some years from 1743. In 1751 the first chapel was built, the 'Boggard House', the scene of many momentous Conferences. The 1755 Conference was important for its discussion of the question 'Whether we ought to separate from the Church of England?' The Rev. William Grimshaw of Haworth was present both at this, the 1753 Conference, and that of 1762, when the question of separation was again on the agenda. The 1769 Conference here sent the first pair of missionaries to America—Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor. In 1784 the Deed of Declaration was presented and authorized at a Leeds Conference, and plans for the new Methodist Church of America were made.

In St. Peter's churchyard was buried Sarah Crosby, the first woman preacher of Methodism.

Leeds Brunswick was built in 1825, and long continued a magnetic preaching centre, reaching its zenith during the ministries of Leslie D. Weatherhead and William E. Sangster. Its career was overshadowed at the outset by a dispute over the installation of an organ.

Wesley College, Headingley, was the first to be built (in 1868) for the specific purpose of training Wesleyan Methodist ministers. In its centenary year it was amalgamated with Didsbury College, Bristol, whither its important Wesleyana were transferred. Didsbury thereupon took the name, 'Wesley College.'

Four miles north-east of the centre of Leeds is **Seacroft**. The chapel here was erected in 1751, and Wesley preached in it ten years later. Although the interior has been altered, the side walls are those of the original building, so that it is one of the oldest Methodist chapels in the world.

**Birstall**, seven miles south-west of Leeds, famous as the birthplace of Dr. Joseph Priestley, is of real importance to Methodists as the birthplace and home of one of Wesley's righthand men, John Nelson. Nelson's *Journal* is one of the most adventurous autobiographies in existence. As a lay preacher he introduced Methodism into much of the surrounding area, and was buried in the churchyard here in 1774. The parish church contains a modern tablet paying tribute to his memory. His study, a tiny building containing his desk and the chair from which he used to preach in the open



air, is still to be seen in the burial-ground adjoining the chapel. The first Methodist Society here met in Nelson's own home, now identified as 65 Boothroyd.

At **Keighley**, eight miles north-west of Bradford, are the first circuit records of Methodism, commenced in 1748 by the Rev. William Grimshaw. These, together with other interesting documents, are preserved in the strong room of the Temple Street church.

**Haworth**, four miles south-east of Keighley, has achieved fame because of the Brontës. The outstanding figure of the previous century, however, and a contributory cause to the Brontës' fame, was William Grimshaw, the premier evangelist of the north, a close personal friend of the Wesleys and Whitefield, and singled out by Wesley to lead the Methodist societies after his own death—though in the event Grimshaw predeceased Wesley. Although the church of Grimshaw and Brontë has been pulled down, the old parsonage contains important Grimshaw documents as well as Brontë relics, and in the church may be seen the great flagons which Grimshaw had to provide for the crowds who came to Holy Communion. Other relics are the stone slab which commemorated the church extension necessary in Grimshaw's day, the stone font which he provided, and the sounding-board from his pulpit. The three-decker pulpit itself is now in the mission church at Stanbury, a mile to the west. Half a mile from the church is Grimshaw's own dwelling, Sowdens, where many leaders of the revival preached, including the Wesleys. Grimshaw also built a Methodist chapel in the village, which is still in use.

**Lightcliffe**, three miles east of Halifax, was one of the most important northern centres of the 18th-century revival. Methodist and Moravian leaders came here to Smith House, a fine old mansion still in occupation. Here in 1742 and the following years Elizabeth Holmes was hostess to Count Zinzendorf, Peter Böhler, Benjamin Ingham, William Grimshaw, Henry Venn, William Romaine, and most of the other prominent figures of the revival. Though it was of prime importance for the Moravians, particularly before the building of their centre at Fulneck, Wesley also frequently preached there, and the ancient staircase which he used is still in its original condition.

**Todmorden**, ten miles west of Halifax, and on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire, was the scene of the first Methodist Quarterly Meeting. This was held on 18th October,



1748, in a solid house in Todmorden Edge, a hamlet on the ridges of the hill towering over Todmorden itself.

**Heptonstall**, four miles north-east of Todmorden, contains one of the few early Methodist octagonal chapels still in use. Built in 1764 (the roof being made at Rotherham after the pattern of the Octagon there) it has been extended, and is no longer a regular octagon.

**Manchester.** Hartley College, Alexandra Road, was founded in 1881 for the training of Primitive Methodist ministers. Forty years later it began to co-operate with the United Methodist Theological College at Victoria Park, and in recent times the two have been amalgamated as Hartley-Victoria College. The library contains many interesting relics of early Primitive Methodist history, including manuscript diaries of Hugh Bourne and William Clowes. The library annexe houses the Hobill Collection of Methodist literature and much of James Everett's rich collection of Wesleyana, in addition to his own manuscript diary in twelve volumes.

At **Didsbury**, five miles south of Manchester, the first branch of the Wesleyan Theological Institution was opened in 1842. After a century's noteworthy service in training Wesleyan Methodist ministers, the college has been transferred to Bristol. The fine buildings, still in much their original condition, have been taken over for the training of day-school teachers.

**Liverpool.** Brunswick Chapel in Moss Street (now a 'down-town' district), built in 1811, was the scene of Dr. Thomas Coke's impassioned and successful plea for a mission to Ceylon and India in 1813. Here also in 1820 the famous 'Liverpool Minutes' had their birth. The Centenary Conference of 1839 was held here, when the Rev. Thomas Jackson preached a thanksgiving sermon lasting three hours!

Although the old Methodist buildings in **Chester** have disappeared, the pilgrim to this lovely old city is almost sure to tread in Wesley's footsteps. For in 1752, on the first of over thirty visits, Wesley keenly and thoroughly explored ancient Chester, walking round the Roman walls, and having a special word of praise in his *Journal* for 'The Rows'.

**Mow Cop**, on the borders of Cheshire, and now in the care of the National Trust, is the great place of pilgrimage for those who maintain the spiritual value of the Camp Meeting movement. The first English Camp Meeting was held here



in 1807, and gave rise to the Primitive Methodist Connexion. In addition to the natural rock known from its peculiar shape as the 'Old Man o' Mow', and the ruined 'Folly' built on the hill in the 18th century, there now stands a block of Kerridge stone inscribed, 'To the Glory of God a Camp Meeting near this spot on May 31st, 1807, began the Religious Revival led by Hugh Bourne and William Clowes known as Primitive Methodism.'

**Cliff College**, just outside Baslow, about 13 miles southwest of Sheffield, is a college which specializes in training lay preachers for evangelism. The annual rally on Whit Monday is one of the highlights in the religious year for the surrounding counties. The college possesses a number of literary relics of John Fletcher of Madeley.

In Wesley Chapel, Broad Street, **Nottingham**, William Booth was converted during a mission conducted by the American revivalist James Caughey. After becoming a minister of the Methodist New Connexion he resigned, and founded the Salvation Army.

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#### FOR FURTHER READING

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IT WOULD BE QUITE IMPRACTICABLE TO LIST THE SCORES OF VOLUMES AND pamphlets consulted, but the following selection may be useful for further study of particular shrines. Neither ordinary guidebooks nor general works on the Wesleys and Methodism are included.

All the books are from the Epworth Press unless otherwise stated.

'O.p.' denotes 'out of print'.

*The Homes, Haunts, and Friends of John Wesley* (1891, o.p.)

W. H. Meredith, *Pilgrimages to Methodist Shrines* (Cincinnati, Jennings & Pye, 1903, o.p.)

Frederick C. Gill, *In the Steps of John Wesley* (1962, and Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1963)

George W. Dolbey, *The Architectural Expression of Methodism: the first hundred years* (1964)

Nolan B. Harmon (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*



- (Nashville, The United Methodist Publishing House, 2 vols., 1974)
- O. Mordaunt Burrows, *Epworth, the Home of the Wesleys* (Epworth, Barnes & Breeze, Ltd., no date)
- W. L. Doughty, *John Wesley in Lincolnshire* (1938)
- Luke Tyerman, *The Oxford Methodists* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1873, o.p.)
- George J. Stevenson, *The History of City Road Chapel* (1872, o.p.)
- Catalogue of Manuscripts and Relics, etc., belonging to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference* (1921, o.p.)
- Edward H. Sugden, *John Wesley's London* (1932)
- J. Henry Martin, *John Wesley's London Chapels* (1946)
- Max W. Woodward, *One at London: Some Account of Mr Wesley's Chapel and London House* (1966)
- T. Ferrier Hulme, *Voices of the New Room* (1931, o.p.)
- Historical Tablets: John Wesley's Chapel in Broadmead, Bristol* (1947)
- A. G. Ives, *Kingswood School in Wesley's Day and Since* (1970)
- Thomas Shaw, *A History of Cornish Methodism* (D. Bradford Barton, Ltd., Truro, 1967)
- W. C. Sheldon, *Early Methodism in Birmingham* (Birmingham, Buckles & Webb, Ltd., 1903, o.p.)
- H. H. Prince, *The Romance of Early Methodism in and around West Bromwich and Wednesbury* (West Bromwich, J. G. Tompkins, Ltd., 1925, o.p.)
- W. W. Stamp, *The Orphan-House of Wesley* (1863, o.p.)
- W. F. Swift, *Methodism in Scotland* (1947)

Much useful material is also to be found in the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society (1898 onwards), the Winter Numbers of the *Methodist Recorder* (1892-1907), and the official handbooks prepared in connection with the various Methodist Conferences, both before and after Methodist Union in 1932. See also the publications of the various local branches of the Wesley Historical Society, in Bristol, Cornwall, East Anglia, Lancashire and Cheshire, Lincolnshire, London, the North-East, Plymouth and Exeter, Scotland, the West Midlands, and Yorkshire. (For details of addresses see W. H. S. *Proc.* XXXIX. 117-20 (Feb., 1974).



# EPWORTH—HOME OF THE WESLEYS



The Old Rectory  
*pp. 12-13*

St. Andrew's Church  
*pp. 13-15*



Market place  
and  
Red Lion Inn  
*pp. 11-12*

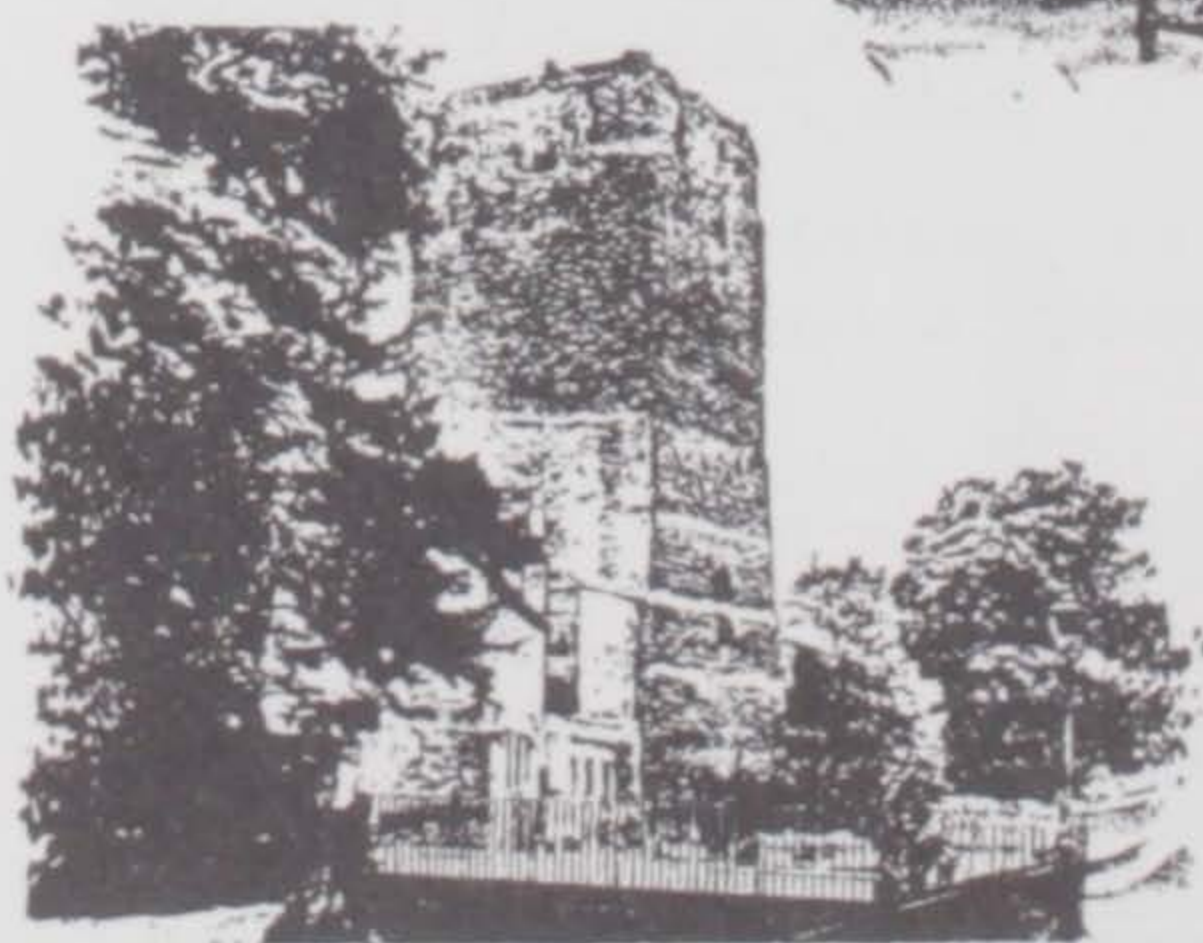
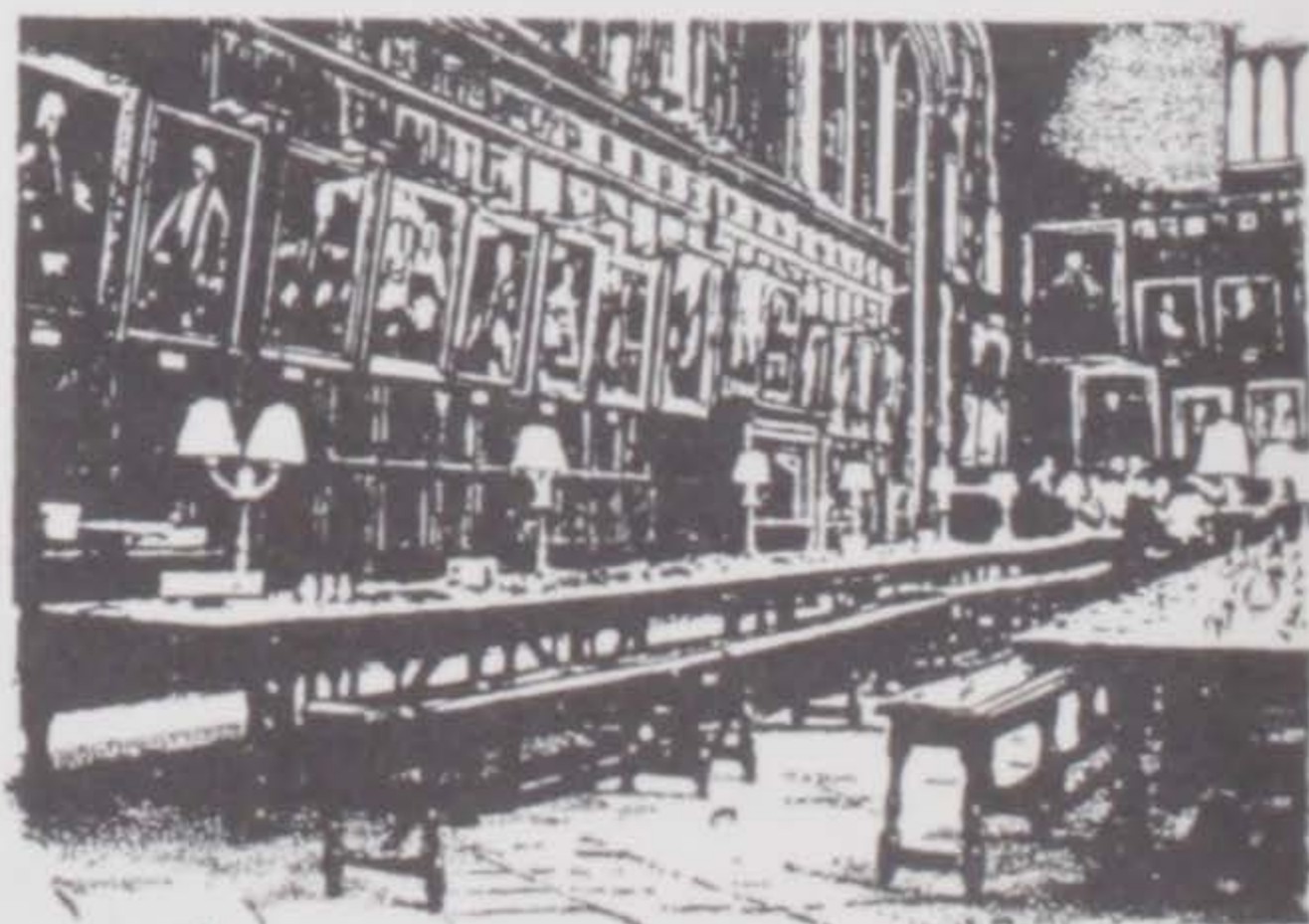


# OXFORD—CRADLE OF METHODISM



Lincoln College,  
Wesley's  
traditional rooms  
*pp. 20-23*

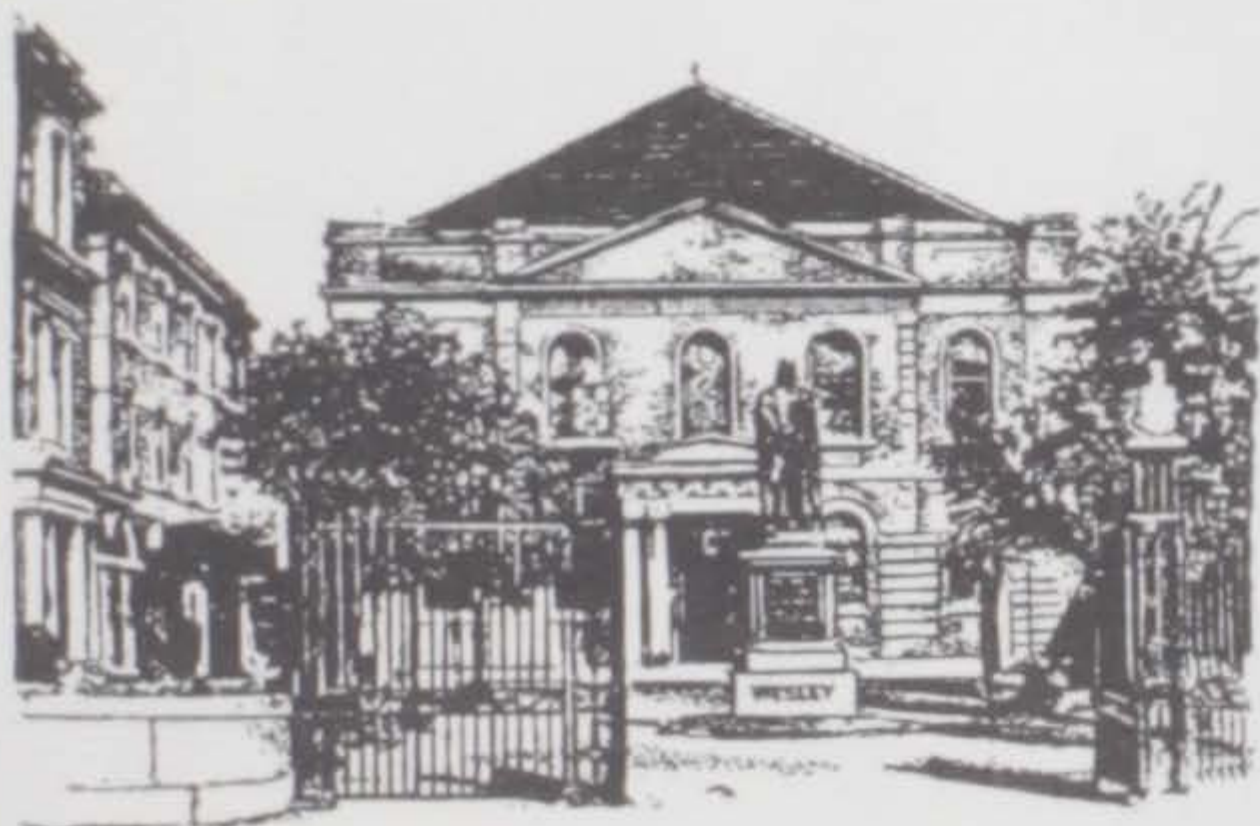
Christ Church  
Dining Hall  
*p. 26*



The Castle Prison  
from which  
Wesley preached  
*pp. 29-32*



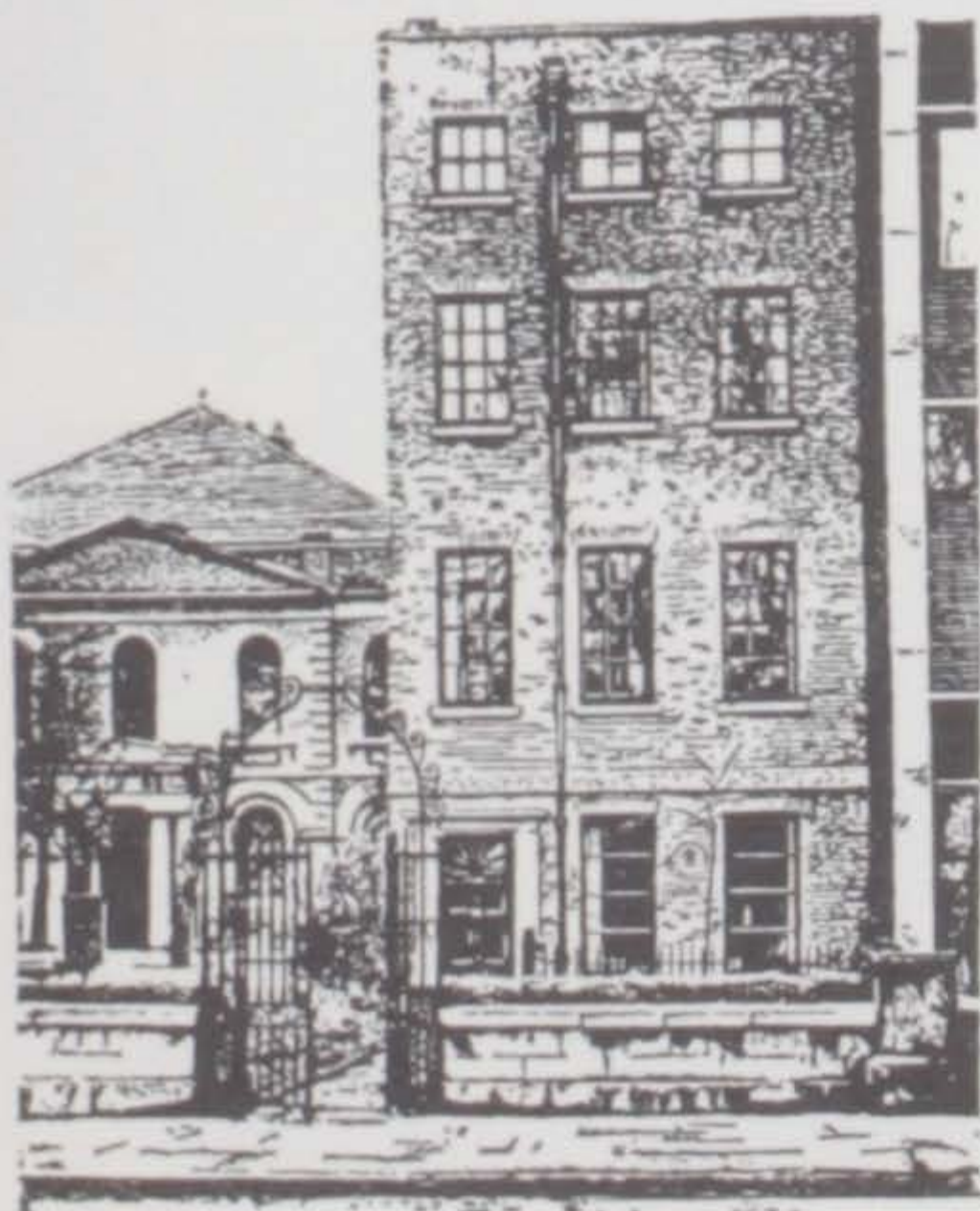
# LONDON—WESLEY'S GENERAL HEADQUARTERS



Wesley's Chapel  
*pp. 35-38*



Wesley's Grave  
*p. 36*



Wesley's House  
*pp. 37-39*



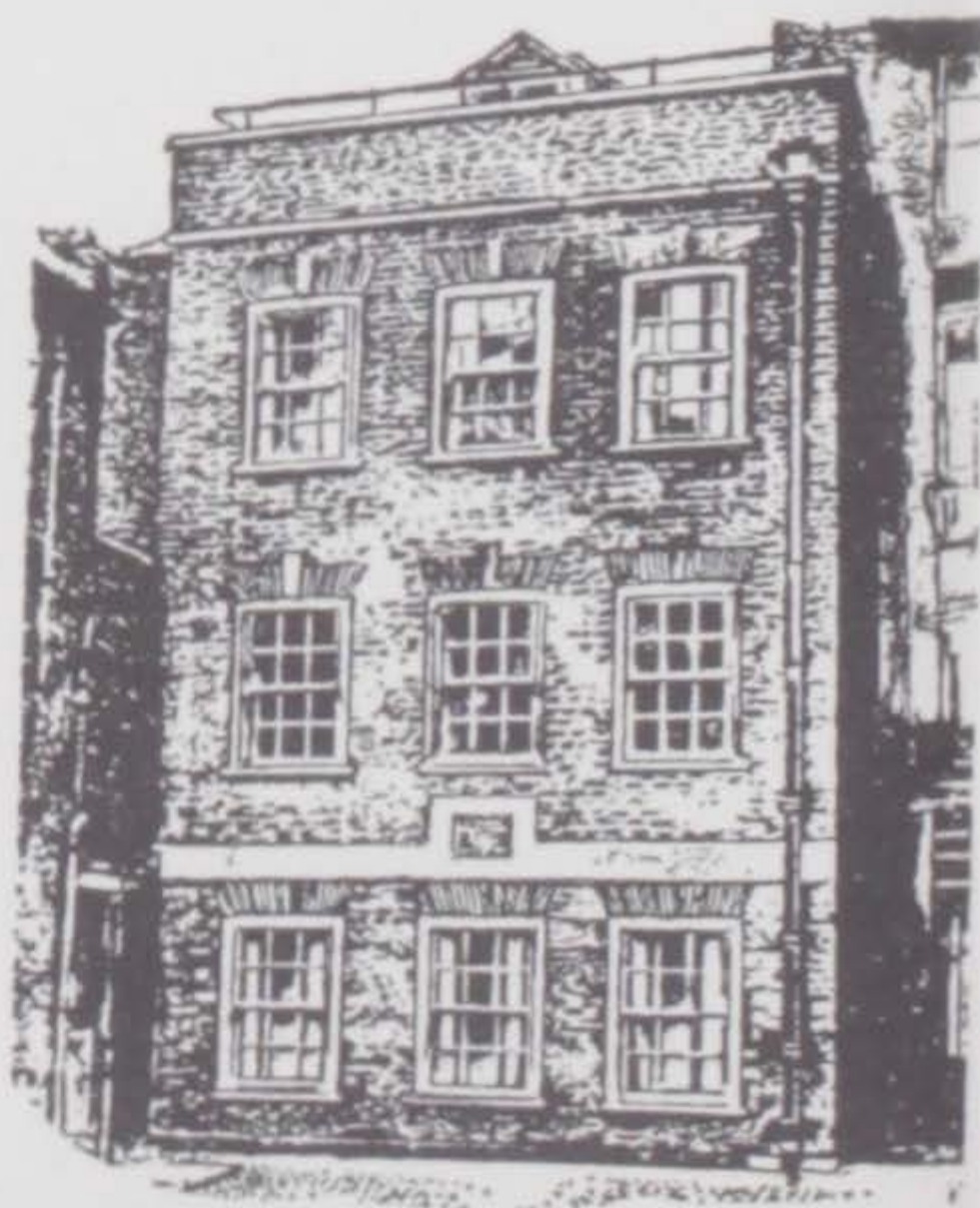


Bunhill Fields

*p. 39*

Susanna Wesley's House

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Great St. Helen's Church

*pp. 41-42*





Charterhouse  
*pp. 43*

Aldersgate Street  
(tablet)  
*p. 44*



Little Britain  
*p. 44*





Memorial at  
Westminster Abbey  
*pp. 54-55*

Westminster  
Central Hall  
*pp. 54-55*



Moravian Cemetery,  
Chelsea  
*pp. 55-56*



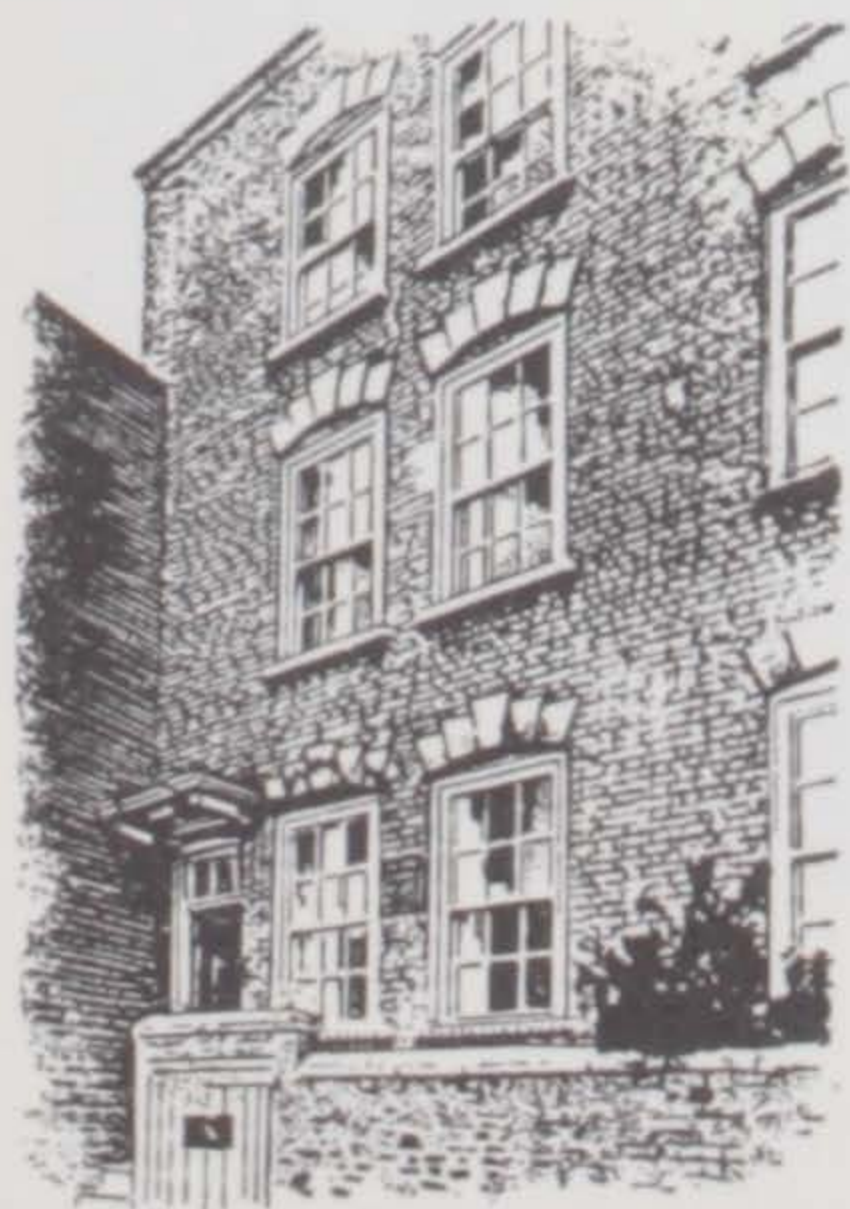
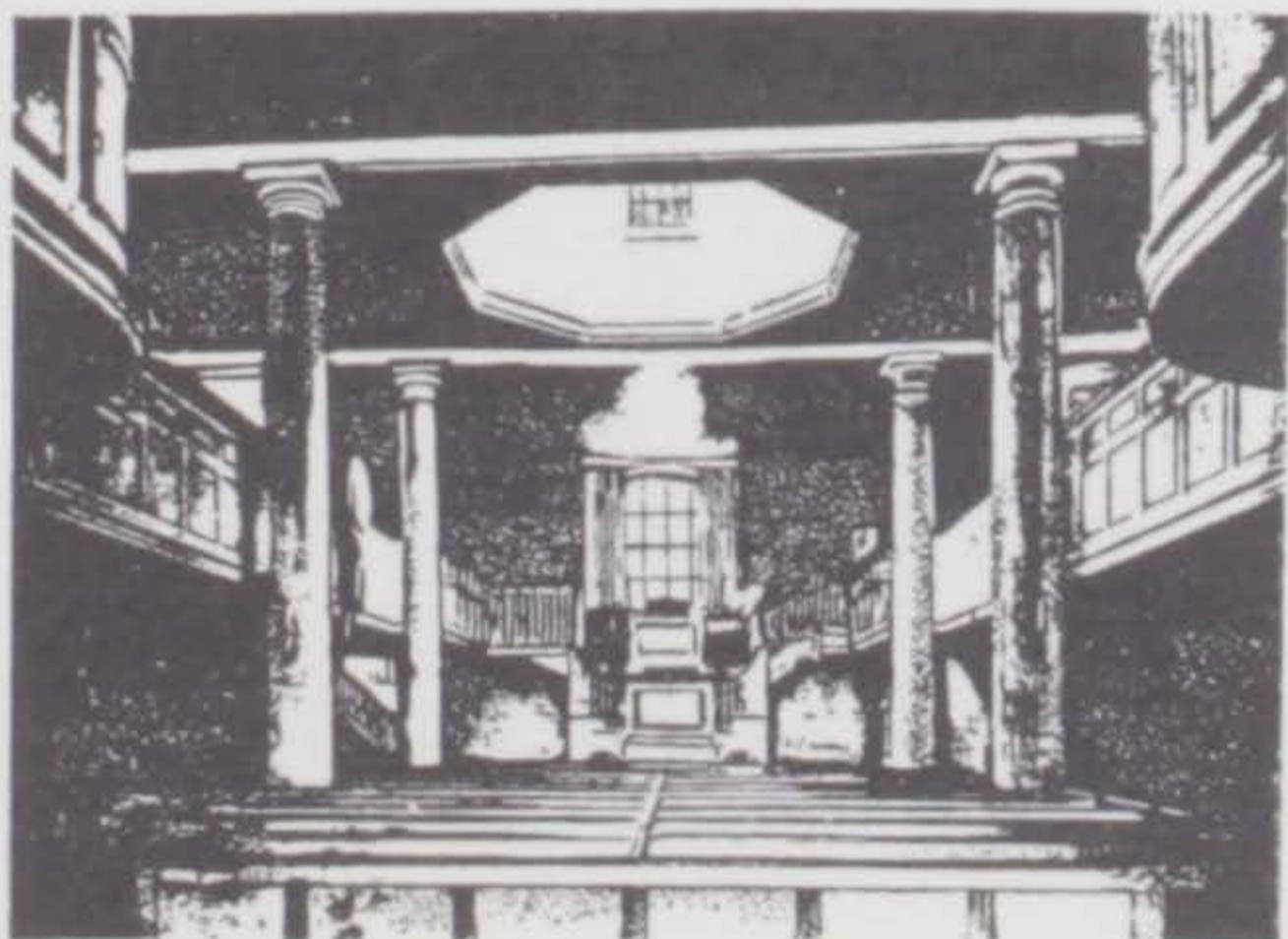
# BRISTOL—WESTERN HEADQUARTERS



"The New Room in  
the Horse-Fair"

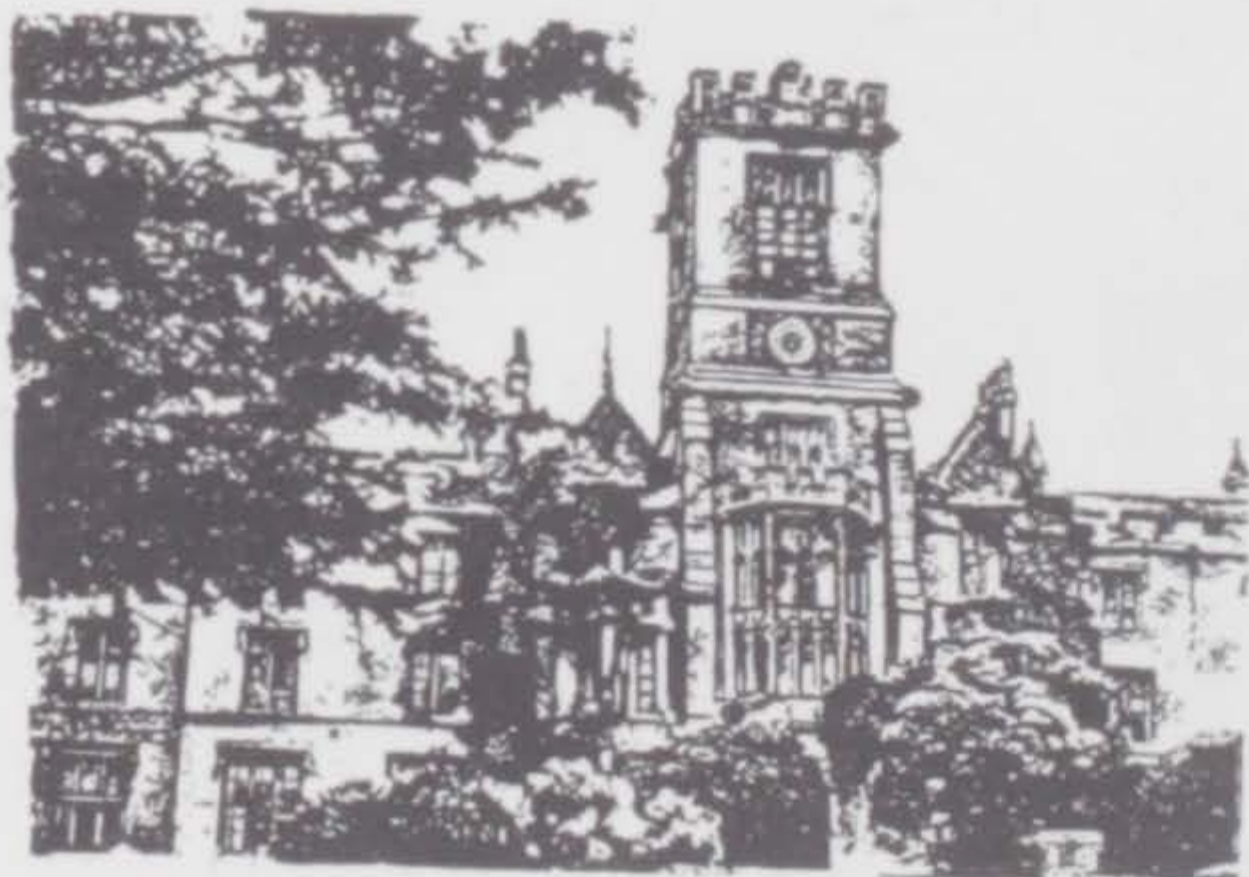
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The New Room,  
interior  
*pp. 60-61*

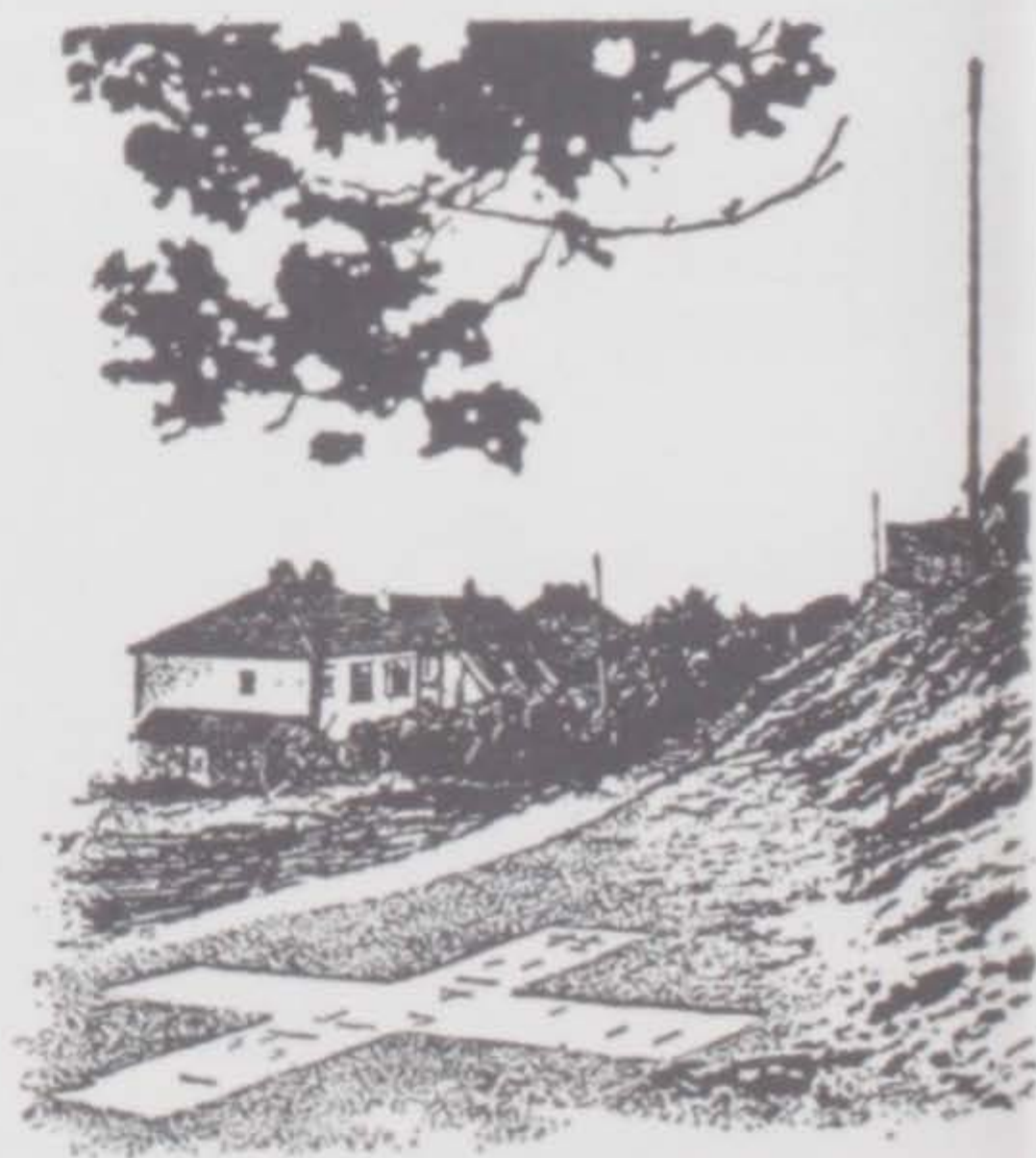


Charles Wesley's  
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*pp. 62-63*





Kingswood School,  
Bath  
*pp. 68-69, 71-72*



Hanham Mount,  
Bristol  
*p. 70*



Lady Huntingdon's  
Chapel, Bath  
*p. 72*

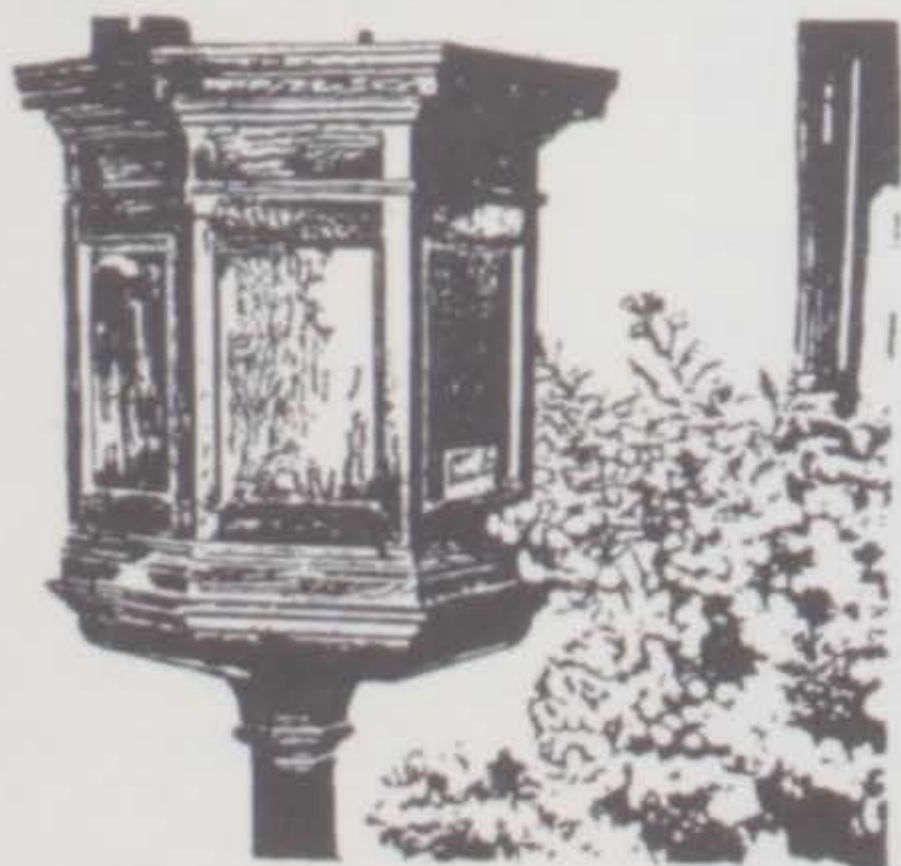




The Bell Hotel,  
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birthplace of  
George Whitefield  
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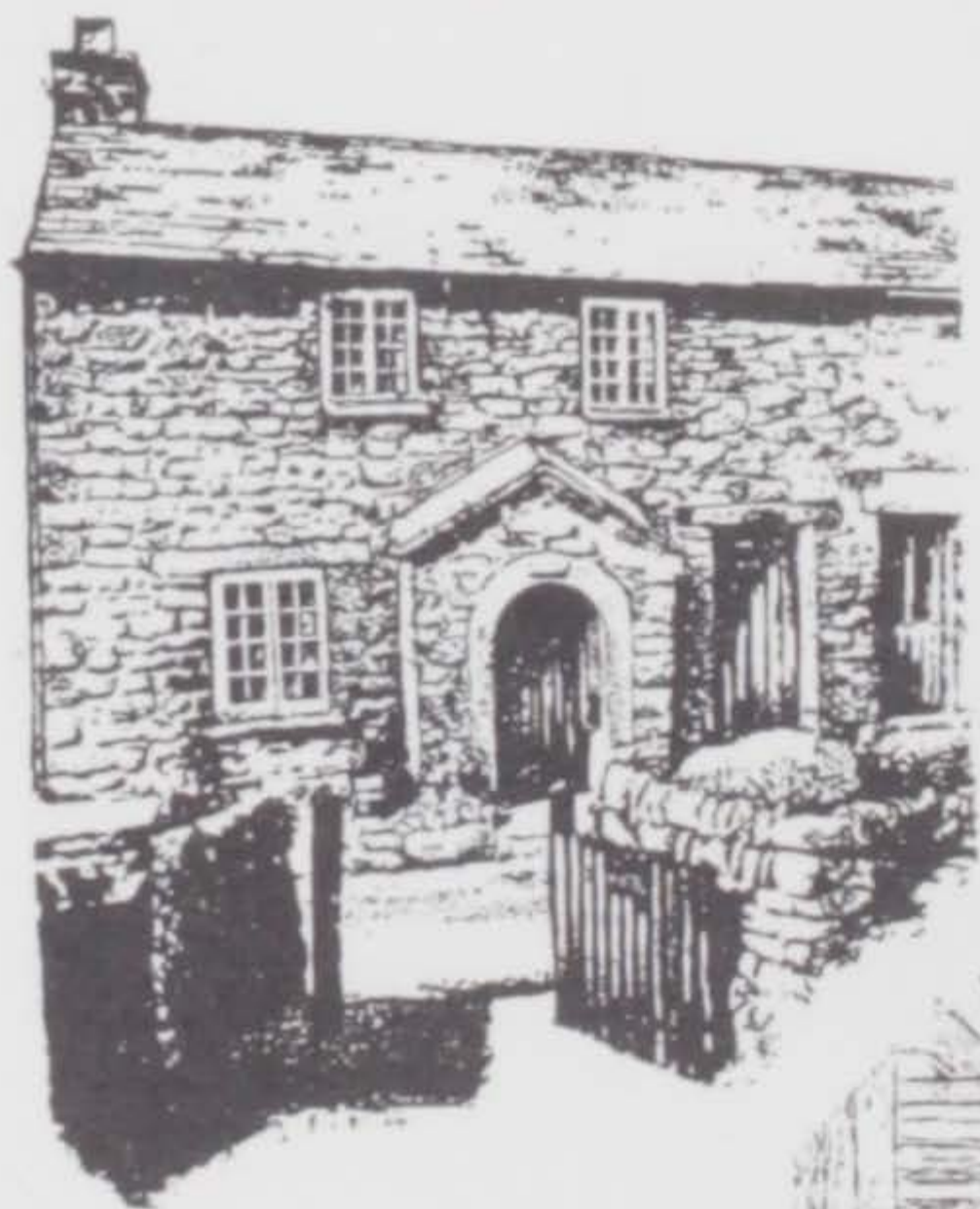


Robert Raikes'  
first Sunday School,  
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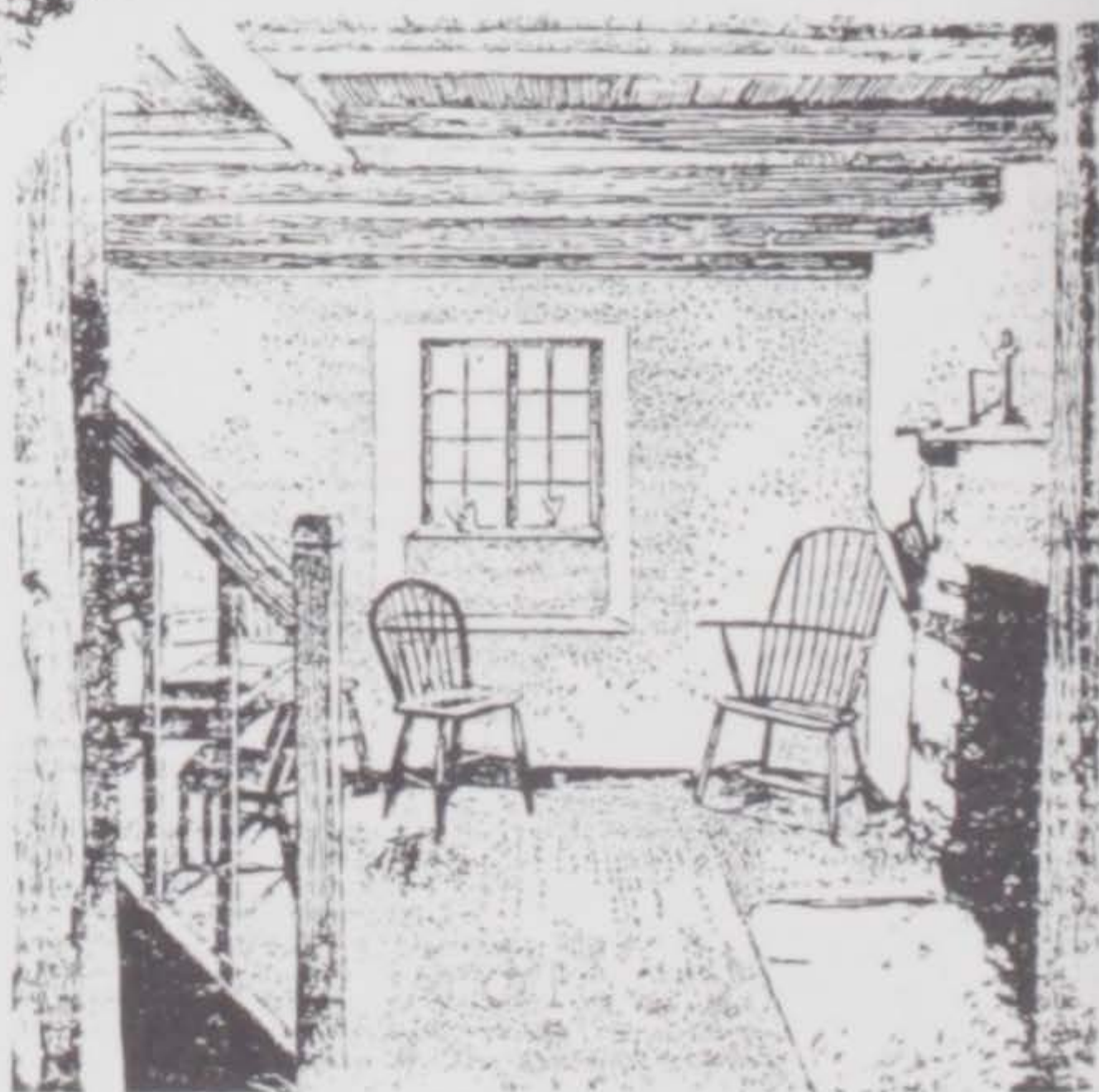


Wineglass pulpit,  
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Isbell's Cottage,  
Trewint  
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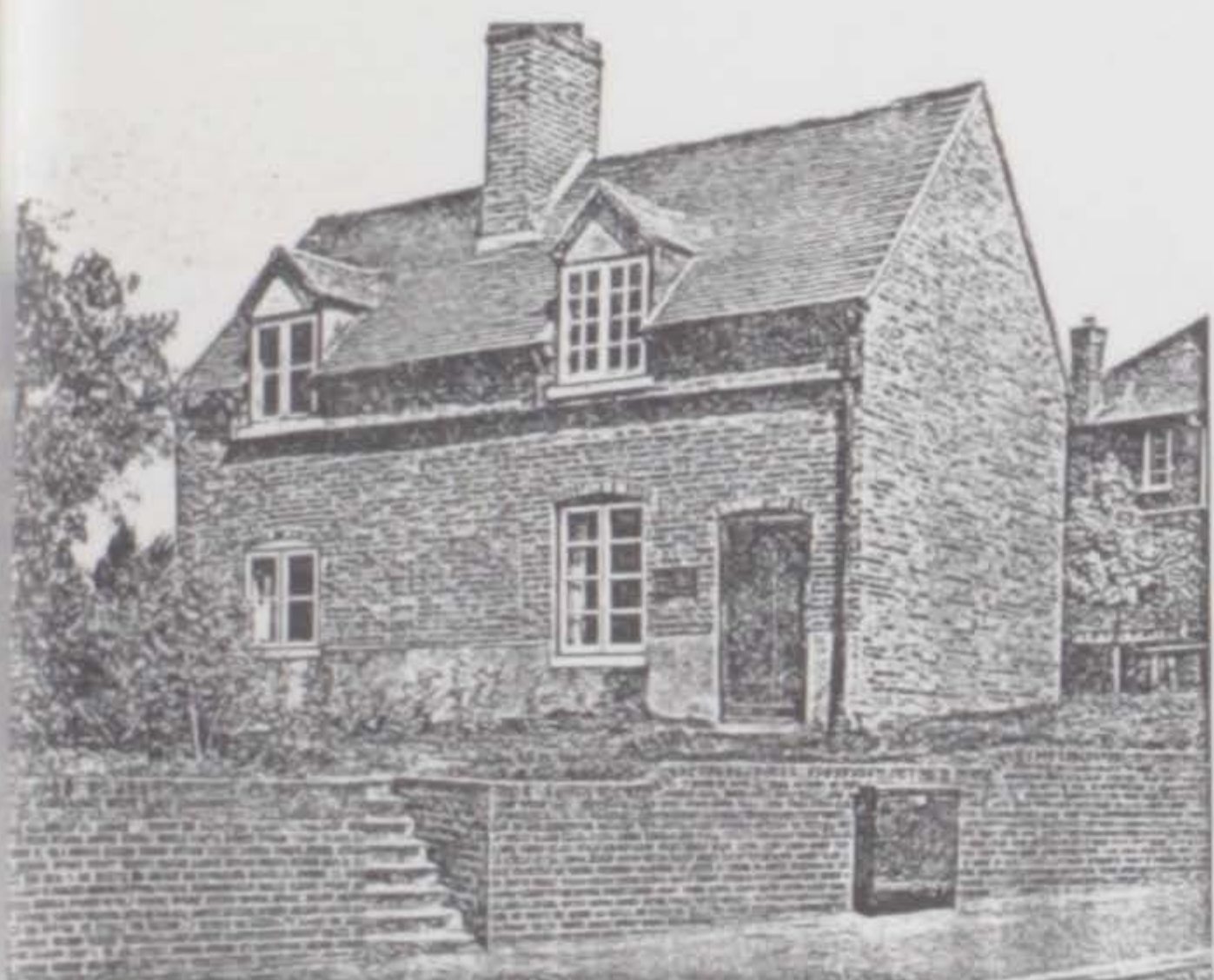
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Gwennap Pit,  
Cornwall  
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## ASBURY'S TRAINING-GROUND



Asbury Cottage,  
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The Oak House,  
West Bromwich  
*pp. 77-78*



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# JOHN FLETCHER'S MADELEY



Iron Bridge

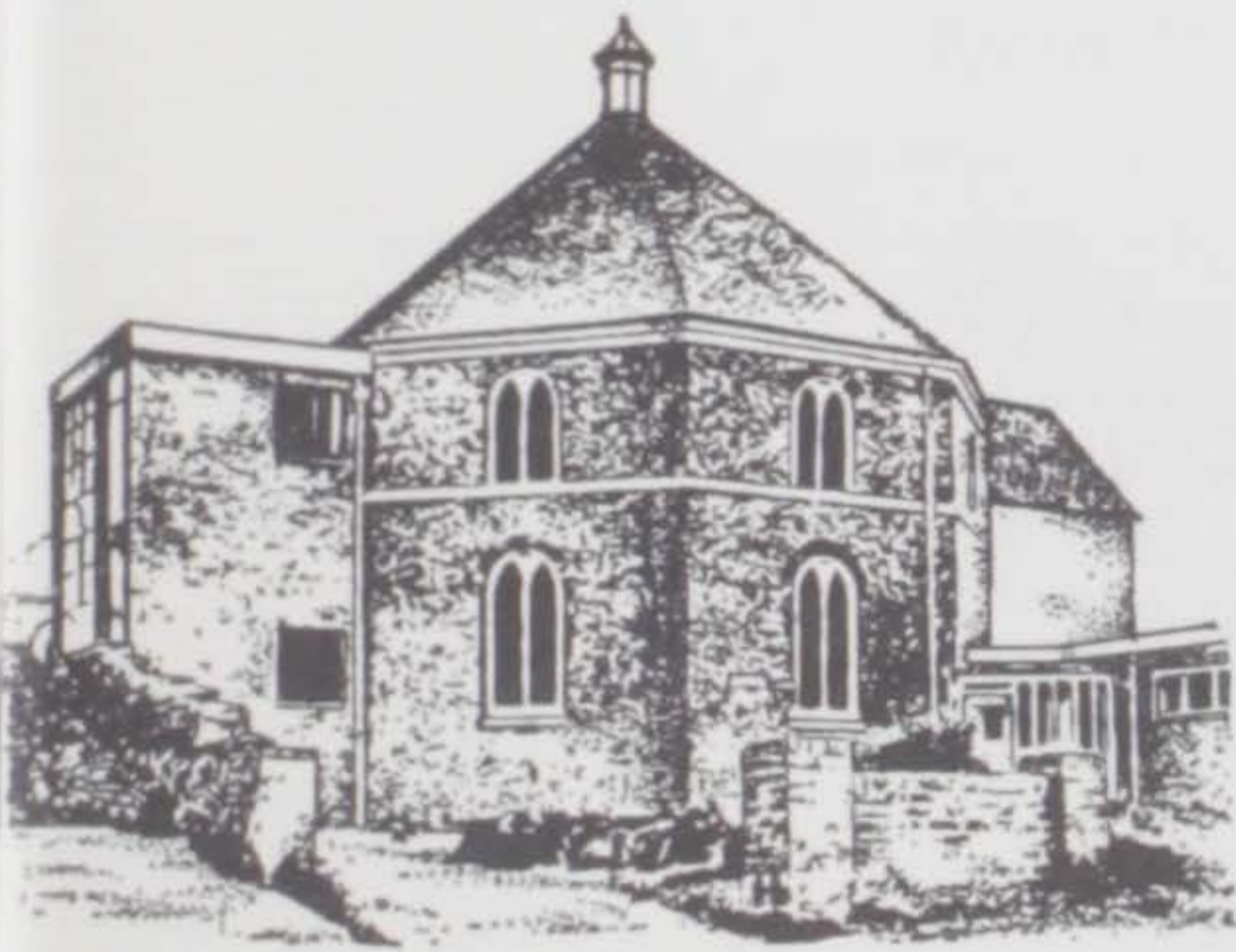
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Parish Church  
*p. 83*



The Vicarage  
*p. 83*

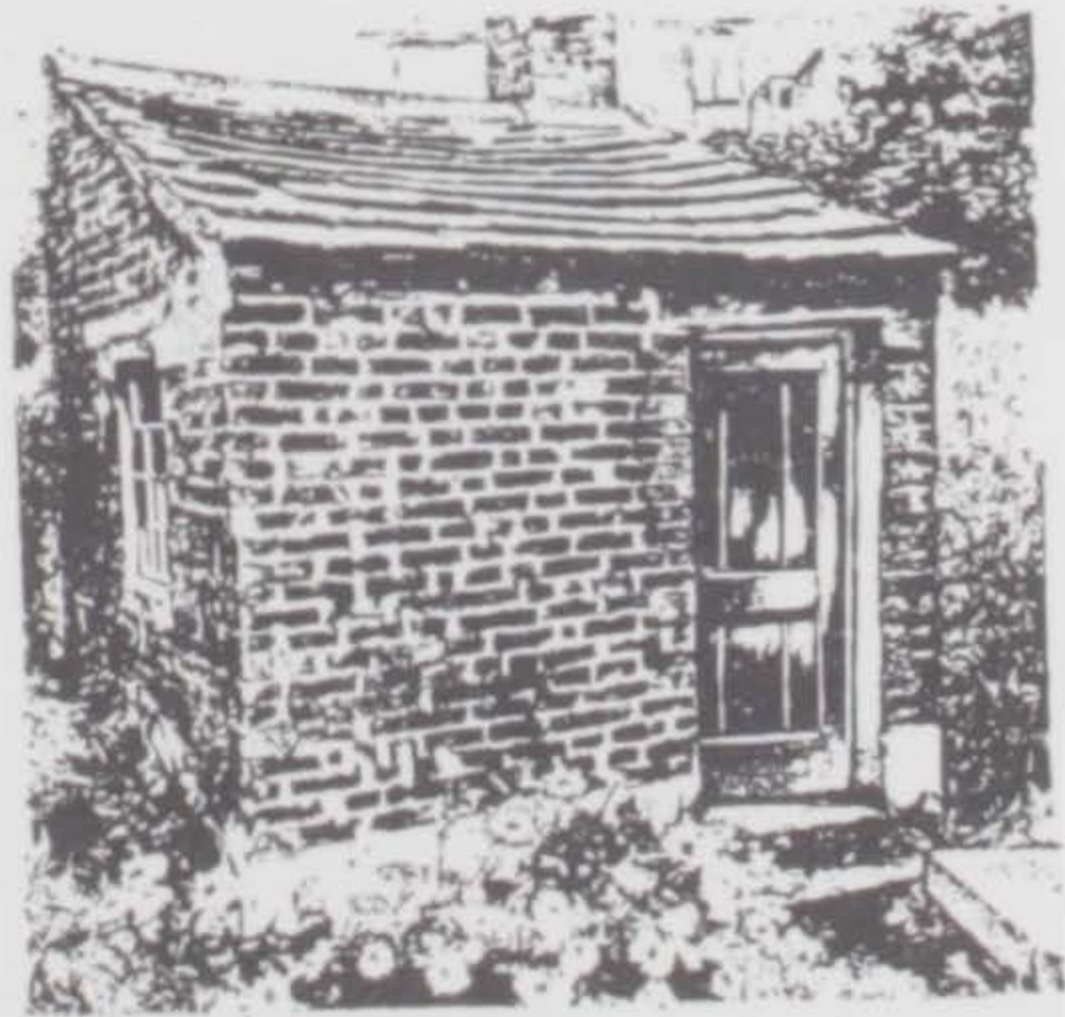


SOME NORTHERN SHRINES



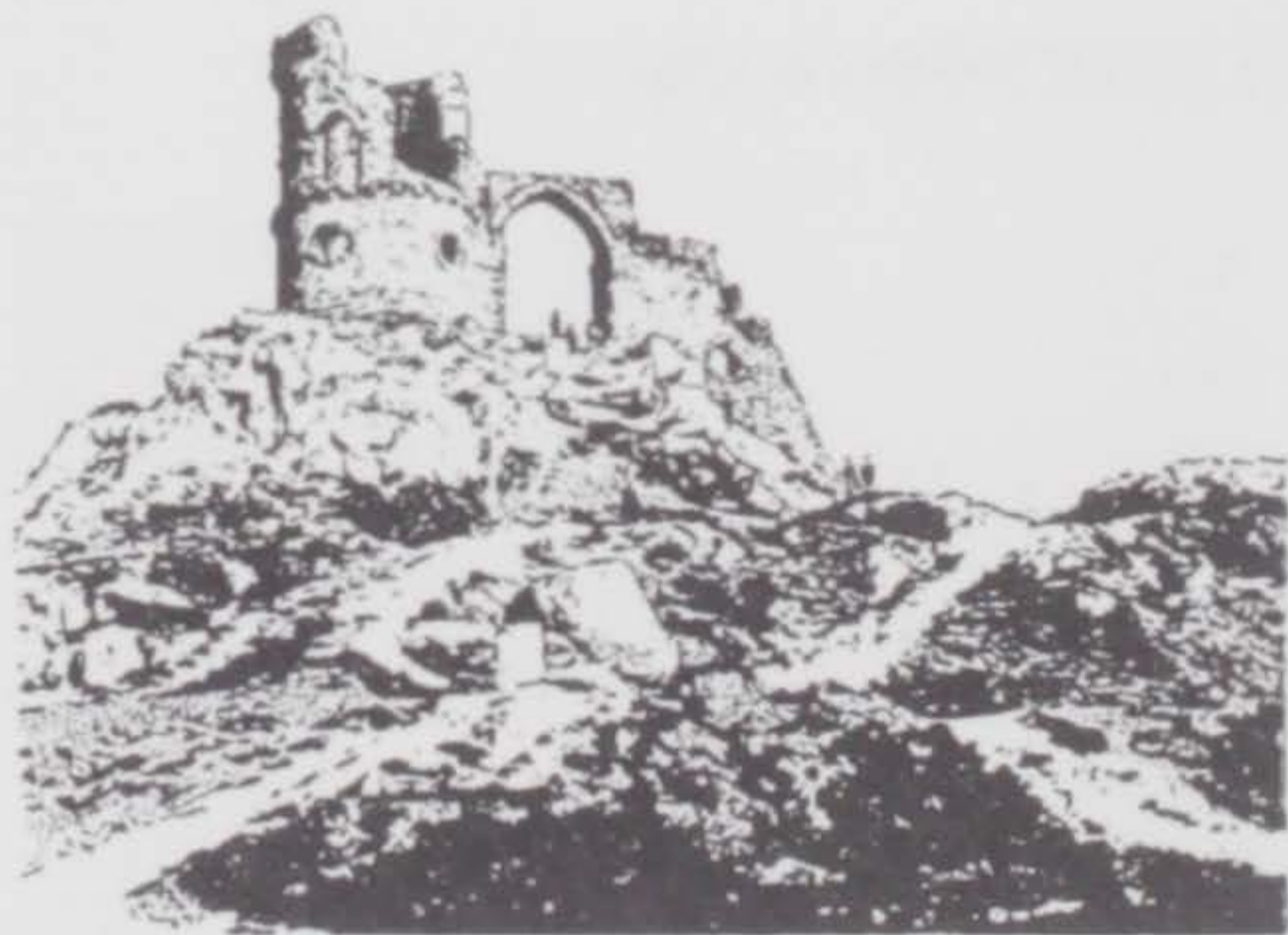
Octagon Chapel,  
Yarm  
*p. 89*

John Nelson's Study,  
Birstall  
*pp. 90-91*



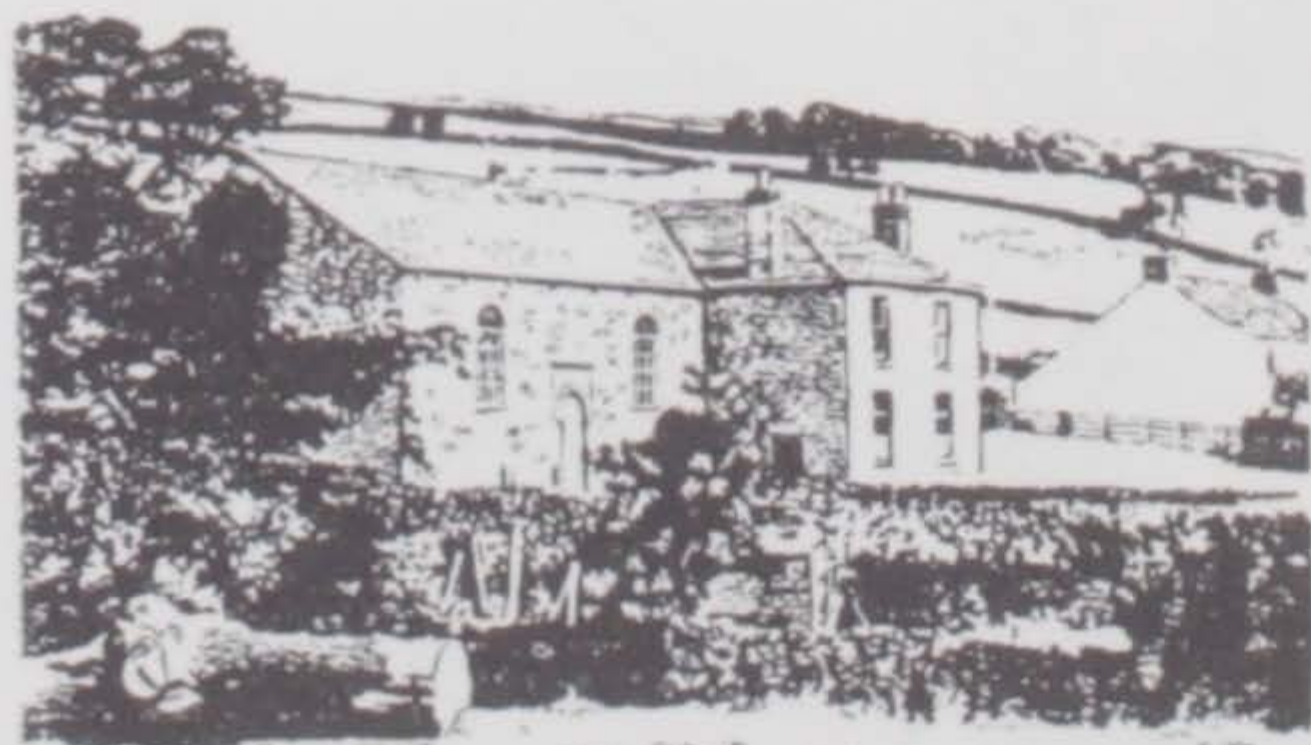
Todmorden,  
Venue of  
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Mow Cop,  
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The Old Hall,  
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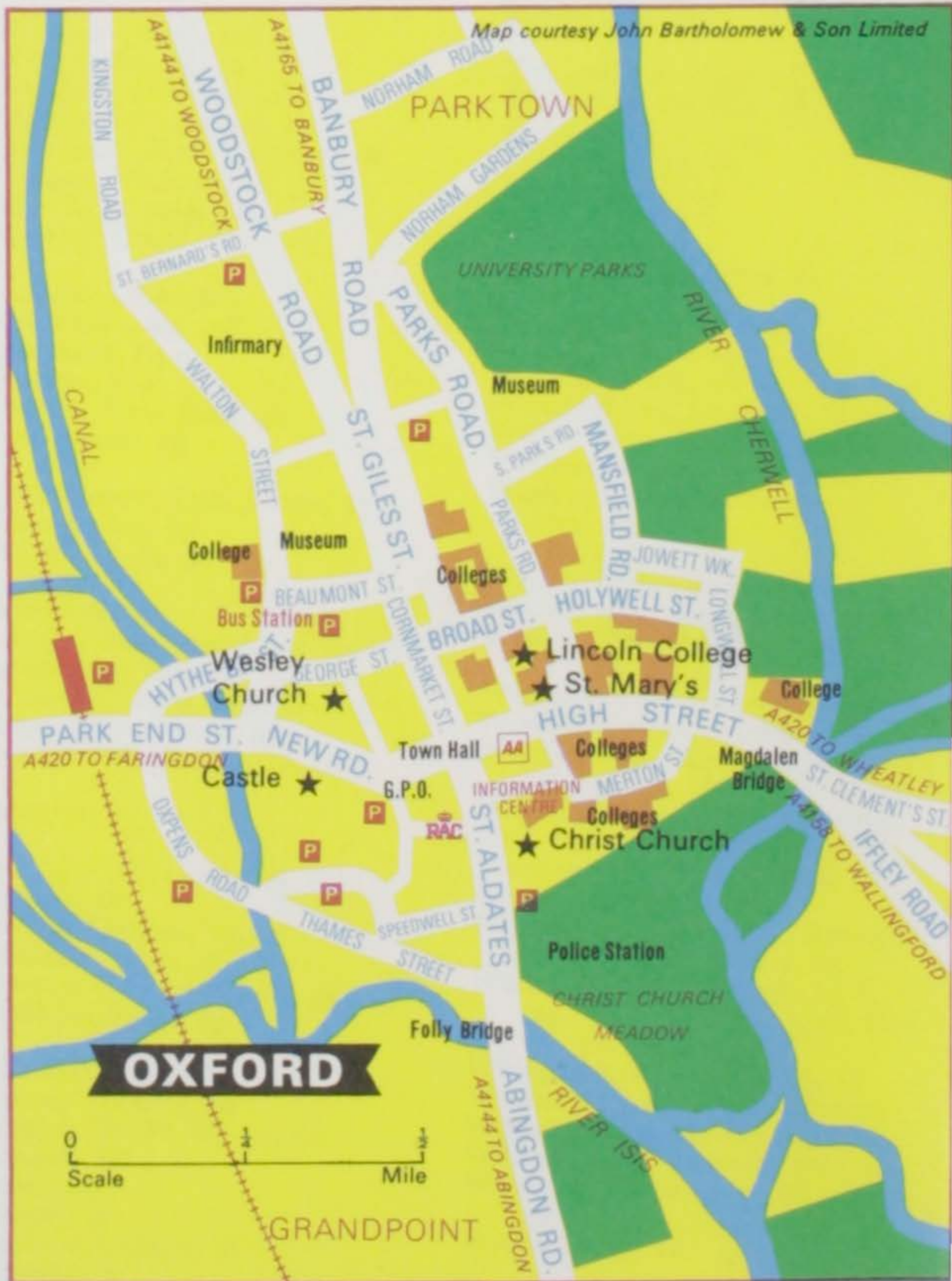
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Map courtesy John Bartholomew & Son Limited



# OXFORD



GRANDPOINT





# BRISTOL

Scale 0 1/4 1/2 Mile

COTHAM

★  
Portland  
Chapel  
(site of)

King  
Square

★  
Charles  
Wesley's  
House

ST. PAUL'S

BOND STREET

Infirmary

★  
St. James's

★  
Wesley's  
Chapel

Hospital

University

Police  
Station

Guildhall

G.P.O.

INFORMATION CENTRE

CLIFTON

★  
Clifton  
Suspension Bridge

# BRISTOL

Scale 0 1/4 1/2 Mile

Council House

★  
Cathedral

ST. PHILIP'S

★  
Field-preaching  
site

HOTWELL  
ROAD

FLOATING  
HARBOUR

Hospital

Temple Meads  
Station

CORONATION ROAD

CORONATION ROAD

YORK ROAD

BEDMINSTER

AIRPORT  
BLACKPOOL

BATH ROAD



