

Rivington Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel



Founded 1662

Built 1703

"Here set no man a stranger be"



February - April 2013

www.ukunitarians.org.uk/rivington

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Chairman's Letter

Happy New Year everyone. 2013 has certainly got off to an auspicious start. Work on the Chapel approach road was completed on Tuesday 8th January. We couldn't quite afford to have the road completely remade, but the resurfacing work, done at a cost of £1896.00 inc. VAT, by K. Darlington & Sons Ltd. of Adlington, looks superb. If it lasts as well as it looks like it should, then it will certainly be money well spent. Thanks to Elsie and David from The Tea Rooms and Mark and Helen from the Old Post Office who kindly also made contributions towards the cost. You never know, we may even get to re-do the little parking area at the front of the Chapel at this rate.

The One Accord concert on December 13th was really great fun, what with a new instrument on show and Peter's athleticism, it was not be missed. Some of the audience who had been to a concert by The York Waits, well-known performers of early music, in Huddersfield, thought that our event was easily a match for it, if not better; I don't think it was just the mulled wine talking. Altogether a most enjoyable evening, it also brought the bonus of raising £104 towards Chapel funds. Thank you Linda, Alison, Peter and John, thank you One Accord.

Hooray! No snow meant a full house for the Carol Service. What a day it was. The carol singing was lovely, as was the scene created by the (many) children's faces when Santa Claus joined us and added to the merriment (thanks Dean). As if that wasn't enough, the "Shepherds' Play", directed by Dennis Crompton and acted-out by Dennis, Chris, Geoff, Muriel, Frank and Linda, was an absolute triumph. The atmosphere this created was wonderful, no doubt augmented by the splendid Elizabethan-themed decoration which had taken place in the Chapel. This 'decking-out the halls with

boughs of holly' had happened thanks to the efforts of the congregation but mainly to those of Joan Thursby. Everywhere was festooned with fir, holly and ivy and we even had mistletoe in an Elizabethan "kissing-ring", built by Jo Clarke, which was suspended from the ceiling in the middle of the Chapel. All this was topped off by authentic pomanders Joan had spent hours making and a fantastic Christmas tree expertly decorated by Jimmy. Derian House Children's Hospice also appreciated Joan's handiwork and have written to us in thanks for the chocolates in boxes she had made for them and for the children at the service. All in all, a huge THANK-YOU to all who helped to make the day so special and so memorable.

In the pipeline; there is a possibility of some filming for a Channel 4 production at the Chapel some time in the New Year. Just before Christmas, Rev. Jane Barraclough, of Cross Street Chapel, was contacted by a locations manager; on hearing what he had to say she immediately thought of us. I rang him and, on the same day, I was able to show him around. The up-shot is that he liked what he saw and thought our Chapel ideal for their purposes. So, fingers crossed then.

Unfortunately two more Chapel members have passed away recently. Norman Hough, for many, many years a key figure in chapel life, not least as Chairman and Treasurer of the Trustees, and Mrs Ellis who always had the interests of the Chapel at heart. Both are sadly missed and our thoughts and prayers are with their family and friends.

Lastly I would just like to once again wish everyone a Happy and Prosperous 2013.

God Bless

Vince

A Note from the Editor

Don't forget that if you would like to help us reduce the cost of printing and posting the newsletter, you can opt to have an e-mail version rather than a paper copy. You can, of course, read this and past issues online at www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk. If you are happy to do so, please contact me on newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk, so that the mailing list can be amended.

Please also use this e-mail address to send me your contributions for the newsletter.

Alison

The Shepherds' Play as part of the Carol Service, 2012

“Yan, tan, tethera, methera, pip; taytera, laytera, onera, covera, dix.” Those who filled the chapel for the wonderful Carol service may have been surprised at being counted as sheep. This is exactly what was happening at the start of the Shepherds' Play when the first shepherd cast a weary eye over the congregation. This method of counting sheep has been traditional since the time that the Celts occupied most of Britain and curiously it pre-dates our present decimal system by almost a thousand years. The play itself used my script based on an episode from one of the mystery or craft plays shown in the streets of Chester from the 14th century until about 1575. These simple plays covered Bible stories from the Creation to the Crucifixion. Each craft guild would put on an episode that suited its trade. Thus the carpenters would present Noah's Flood, while it would have fallen to the weavers to perform the Shepherds' plays. The actors saw their characters and clothes as belonging to rural England rather than to the Holy Land. So this play moves from rough comedy to wonder and

to religious conviction, showing ordinary English folk in extraordinary circumstances.

I cannot remember much drama being performed here: the chapel's box pews present challenges for both the audience and for any director or actors and rehearsal time is short. Amongst the pleasant surprises was the song of the angel Gabriel drifting of course from the pulpit. Linda tells me that she used a tune discovered by Peter Bearon in an old manuscript book he found in the chapel's upper vestry. It was therefore the first time it had been heard in chapel for many years.

The medieval alliterative style of verse would also be strange to a modern audience for it rhymes not only vowels but also consonants and would, of course, be difficult for the elderly to learn. However it all followed in the spirit of the year.

The readings were all from the Elizabethan period, the carols mainly so. The only anachronism (and a happy one) was the arrival of Dean's superb Father Christmas with our regular accordionist playing 'Jingle Bells', but as in previous years, the host of children didn't worry at all about that.

The Rivington congregation had indeed entered into the spirit of Christmas, Peace and Goodwill and, as one of the Shepherds said, "To that bliss bring us, if it be thy will; Amend all things that be amiss, Good folk now fare thee weal."

[*Cast:* Hankin - Chris Oldham; Sim - Geoff Newey; Tod - Dennis Crompton; Angel - Linda Green ; Mary - Muriel Jones; Joseph - Frank Ascroft. *Properties* - Leighton Jones; *Script and Direction* - Dennis Crompton]

Dennis Crompton

Dates for Your Diary in 2013

It's that time of year again so here are our key dates for the year ahead for your diaries.

Sun 3rd March	Congregational AGM
Sat 4th May	Rivington Spring Festival and Chapel Open Day
Sun 19th May	Anniversary Sermons Service led by Rev Bill Darlison - Wakefield
Sun 2nd June	Strawberry Tea
Sat 14th Sept	Late Summer Fair and Heritage Open Day
Sat 5th Oct	Rivington Pilgrimage Service led by Marion Baker - Sheffield Toast to Civil & Religious Liberties by Neville Kenyon - Bury
Sun 15th Dec	Carol Service

Chapel Flowers

You may have noticed that there is an empty space in the flower donor rota this issue. If you would like to join the list of flower donors and can provide the flowers for Sunday 3rd March, please contact the secretary, Joan Thursby (see contact details on page 11).

Joan would also be happy to hear from anyone who would be willing to donate the flowers for the service on Sunday 20th October.

Snippets from the Past

Extract from **The Bolton Chronicle, 1844**

Rural Rejoicings at Rivington

The pleasant and picturesque village of Rivington was, on Monday last, the scene of a charming series of rustic, social enjoyments. In the forenoon the members of the Rivington Male and Female Friendly Benefit Societies assembled to celebrate the anniversary of their establishment. A procession was formed, which proceeded through the village, and on arriving at the village green, a country dance was proposed, acceded to by a joyous response, and the parties immediately began to pair. R. Andrews, Esq., ---- with one of the Lancashire witches, "opened the ball," and featly led the way ---- readily and nimbly followed by a varied group of men and matrons, swains and sweethearts. The man of fourscore and the youth of fifteen were participators in this innocent, heartfelt, social enjoyment. Among them was one old man, more than eighty years of age, who has been a member of the male members' club from its commencement. Having passed through the village, the members returned to the house of Mr. Bennett Lowe, the sign of the Black Boy, where the societies hold their meetings, and where they sat down together to an abundant and excellent dinner, prepared under the superintendence of the worthy host and hostess, and which obtained for them the praise of those who partook of it. A report of the condition of the clubs was read, which showed them to be in a flourishing state. Several new members were enrolled, both males and females. The Horwich band led the procession, playing popular airs; at the meeting room they also executed a number of musical pieces with considerable ability. The evening was spent in recreations

of a social but not demanding character. ---- Our correspondent in favouring us with the above, omitted to state that the members of the societies attended divine service at the Presbyterian Chapel, when the Rev. C. B. Hubbard delivered an excellent discourse from the words "Love one another." He forcibly described the advantages arriving from mutual assistance in times of sickness and death. These societies are composed of members of the Church of England and Dissenters, yet, they agree in the greatest harmony, and attend service at church one year and the chapel the other.

Further Enlightenment

How many Charismatics does it take to change a light bulb?

One, since his/her hands are in the air anyway.

How many TV evangelists does it take to change a light bulb?

One. But for the message of hope to continue to go forth, send in your donation today.

How many conservative Anglicans does it take to change a light bulb?

Three. One to change it and two to storm out in protest if the person changing it is a woman!

How many Calvinists does it take to change a light bulb?

None. If God wants the light bulb changed He will do it Himself!

This poem was published in the December 2012 issue of Lancashire Life magazine. It is reproduced here with the kind permission of the author.

Rivington Unitarian Chapel
by Peter Street

Shrubs on the outside wall
are clambering up
on fingertips
to the leaded windows.

The Yew tree at the front gate
has been asking them for a favour
to take one peep to see
if the same tall pulpit
is still there are against the wall
relaxed, welcoming everyone
with bible stories, poetry,
the odd joke or two.

To look whether
the same box pews sitting there
from three hundred years before,
had moved, stretched,
gone walkabout or modern.

Whispers start to leapfrog
over the front few gravestones
back to yew tree saying:
"Everything is as always."

Dates for your Diary

Sunday Services at 2:15 PM

3 February	Rev Bob Pounder - Oldham Chapel
17 February	Rev Tony McNeile - Turton
3 March	Vince Mc Cully - Rivington Chapel
17 March	Peter Sampson - Lancaster
7 April	Veronica & Gordon Walker - Bank Street Chapel
21 April	Dr Irvine Delamore
5 May	Dr Maria Curtis - student at Bank Street Chapel

Flower Donors

3 February	Alison Whitaker and Peter Bearon
17 February	Iris Wharton
3 March	
17 March	Joan Thursby
7 April	Olive Mayor
21 April	Olive Fisher
5 May	Jacqueline Dagnall

Other Dates and Ceremonies

Sun 3 March	Congregational AGM
After Service	
Wed 13 March	Chapel Trustees AGM
7:30 pm	

If you would like to arrange a ceremony at Rivington
Chapel, please contact the Chapel Secretary.

Joan Thursby tel: (01204) 520264

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Please send your contributions electronically if possible to the email
address above. For those without access to the internet I am still
happy to receive handwritten copy,

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