Rivington
Unitarian and Free Christian
Chapel

Founded 1662 Built 1703

"Here let no man a stranger be"

May - July 2014

www.ukunitarians.org.uk/rivington

www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk

Chairman's Letter

If I had to sum up this past year at Rivington Chapel in one word, I would have to say "strengthened". Of course, we don't exist in isolation as people and events beyond our community have an effect on us and our activities. "Strengthened" may seem a bit over the top, but let me explain. Here at this humble Chapel, we have the ideal environment to grow spiritually as individuals and as a community. This is brought about by tireless work of individuals and communities beyond our walls as well as within them under the banner of Unitarianism.

Since 1662 this congregation has reflected every individual's God-given right to seek a spiritual path that is right for them while not being prejudicial to anybody else. And yet, we do not do this alone; how could we? Unitarians may not form the largest church (3000 in the UK, I understand) but I believe we tolerate and nurture the widest spectrum of beliefs and ways of worship. I value this beyond words. It has taken me all my life to come to this realisation, with many twists and turns on the way. My only concern, or motivation if you like, is to do all in my power to keep this channel clear and to further this cause. I am convinced that I share this motivation with most members of Rivington Chapel, for this, surely, is what we stand for.

On Saturday 5 April, we worked hard and long together on the Chapel grounds, as a community, in order to preserve this Chapel. This hard work and all our future efforts mean that the general public can continue to benefit from it. Basically we were all working to preserve this oasis of calm and comfort for future generations,

whether as trustees, the congregation, its committee, or both or none of the above, in the case of Stuart Corns and Tina Booth.

What we do here works on many levels. Firstly, we have the building and grounds which are a great facility that anyone can benefit from; especially at watersheds in their lives, but also at other times. Secondly, and more meaningfully, we are an environment of toleration of all people and their faiths, where they can evolve and flourish spiritually. To be a part of this I am profoundly grateful, as the true value of this is beyond words.

This past year we have had wonderful open services such as the Emily Davison day, we have had fairs and been open more to the public, we have had a musical day with the three choirs and a musical evening with the musicians from the Bay Horse, we have been sung to by One Accord and also the Bennett Singers. We have delighted adults and children alike with our Carol service. We have hosted an important Unitarian Pilgrimage. Though figures may be fractionally down in money terms, we are truly rich in spiritual terms. Yes, we have been there, completely at the service of people, whatever their needs, be they emotional, wishing diversion, wanting to arrange a ceremony or plain curiosity.

I am guessing, but if you take all the above into account, we may have shared our haven with around 650 new or returning people. Even while working in the churchyard at least a dozen complete strangers interacted with me, impressed at everyone's industry. And how many of us are there? About 24 all told. Not bad, not bad at all. How is all this possible? Because of committed, like-minded, caring individuals…. You!

While keeping a grip on our regular commitments, we continue to look for ways of augmenting our activities and we hope to stage a Murder Mystery Play in the Village Tearooms. So, calling all budding thespians, we need you.

Once the ceiling of the upper vestry has been repaired, we will be able to continue improvements and create new uses for this unique, peaceful space. The vestry would naturally be ideal for a Sunday school and would lend itself easily to other activities such as meditation groups, workshops etc. Your thoughts and help with this are valuable, please share your ideas.

Thanks to everyone who works so hard for the Chapel. Special thanks to Joan Thursby who has worked tirelessly as Secretary to the Congregational Committee. She will still be actively involved with Chapel life and will continue as Registrar. Also, special thanks to Leighton and Muriel who are stepping down from the Congregational Committee. They have beavered away quietly and steadily and we have much to thank them for. Leighton's craftsmanship is evidenced by the literature stands in Chapel for which he drew up the plans.

Some words as Lay Person in Charge

Since becoming Lay Person in Charge in 2013, I have felt that this is a title which is more useful for people outside our Chapel environment, especially as they are better able to get a handle on the position of the person they are trusting with important occasions such as naming ceremonies, weddings and blessings etc. (It's a bit of a mouthful, but I suppose the GA feels it must be right.)

Being able to conduct six services a year is, I feel, proving a useful

facility to our community, as there are often times when subjects or themes more important to our congregation can be best served. Separately, I have noticed that the important element of continuity this provides is appreciated by both less frequent and established visitors to our Chapel.

Our visiting preachers, I feel, are of great benefit to us. They provide us with a healthy variety in our spiritual diet. The list is ever-changing; whenever you come across a preacher you feel could be of benefit, I would be most grateful for their details.

It was desperately sad news to hear of the death of Reverend Jane Barraclough, ever a friend to this congregation and an eagerly awaited visiting preacher. We will miss you, Jane, and always think about and pray for you. I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say our heartfelt sympathy goes out to her parents who must be devastated at this loss.

On the whole, I would say that having a Lay Person in Charge is beneficial, but it is only desirable as long as we, as a congregation, are inclusive and that as a rule and wherever possible, everything is openly discussed and acted on in consensus.

Vince

Chairman
Lay Person in Charge

Gardening Party

Vince mentions the gardening party held on 5 April. At the congregational AGM it was decided to hold another one on Wednesday 4 June 4:00pm to 8:00pm. If you are able to come along and help for even a small part of that time it would be greatly appreciated. Please bring along any garden rakes/buckets etc. that might be useful.

Pictures taken at the first gardening party can be seen on the web page www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk

From the Committee

Following the retirement of Joan Thursby and Leighton and Muriel Jones, we welcome three new committee members: Jo Clark, who is taking over as Chapel Secretary, and Paul and Diane Fairclough.

The Chapel will again be open for visitors before service on some Sundays over the summer. If you would like to help out with this, please look out for the rota which will be on the noticeboard, or contact one of the committee members.

Also on the noticeboard is a sheet to sign if you would like to go to the Congregational meal at the Yew Tree Inn, Heath Charnock following the Anniversary Service on Sunday 18 May.

Trustees Matters

The trustees held their AGM on Wednesday 19 March.

Following the requests in the newsletter for a new treasurer, Michael Hough has volunteered for the post. Michael is Norman Hough's son, who was for many years both treasurer and chairman of the trustees. Many thanks to Chris Haighton for undertaking the role for the last 13 years.

The upper vestry ceiling should be repaired in the near future, along with some of the plaster on the ground floor level including the area between the chapel and the lower vestry. Further maintenance matters are being pursued.

Peter Bearon, Chairman of the Trustees
trustchair@rivingtonchapel.org.uk

Rivington Chapel Presents

A MURDER MYSTERY EVENING

Saturday 21 June

in the Village Tearooms

Time: 7:00 pm **Ticket price: £2.50**

Refreshments available **Retiring Collection**

For further details contact: Vince McCully 01257 483733

Dates for Your Diary in 2014

Sat 3 May	Rivington Spring Festival and Open Day
Sun 18 May	Anniversary Sermons Service to be led by Rev Danny Crosby, Dunham Road & Urmston Chapels
Sun 1 June	Strawberry Tea Service to be led by Dr Irvine Delamore
Wed 4 June	Chapel Gardening Party 4:00pm to 8:00pm
Sat 13 Sept	Late Summer Fair and Heritage Open Day
Sun 21 Dec	Carol Service

James Wharton Funeral

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who supported me and my family at my husband's funeral service at the Chapel on March 12 2014. It is at times like these, when something hits you like a bolt out of the blue, that this support is so important

I thank Judith for a wonderful service, Vince for his choice of reading and Joan, Roy, Frank, Leighton and Muriel for preparing the Chapel for the service.

It is with great sadness that I announce my husband James's sudden death on March 3 2014. He was a loving husband and a wonderful stepfather to my son Phillip. I'm going to miss him greatly

Best Love

Iris and Phillip

Chapel Trustees & Congregational Committee Roles

At the recent Trustees meeting it was suggested that we should put an item in the Newsletter to explain the roles of the Chapel Trustees and the Congregational Committee, in order to clarify them.

The Trustees are registered with the Charity Commissioners and are responsible for '*the management of the fabric of Rivington Chapel and the associated grounds and buildings to enable religious worship and other related activities to continue.*' There were originally 6 constituent charities, but these were amalgamated when the Trustees were registered with the charity commissioners in 1965. Full details can be found by looking on the Charity Commissioners' website and searching on Rivington Chapel. Income and expenditure for the past few years can also be viewed on the website.

The Congregational Committee is responsible for the worship and other events that take place within the Chapel. The committee is selected by the annual general meeting of the congregation held each Spring.

So what does this mean in practice? Anything to do with the fabric of the building or maintenance of the grounds is clearly a Trustees matter. Anything to do with services, rites of passage etc. is clearly the responsibility of the Congregational Committee. However, this does leave grey areas. For instance, when it was decided that the access road up to the Chapel needed to be resurfaced the Chapel's share of the costs was split evenly between the Trustees and the congregation.

The main income for the Trustees comes from the rent of the tea-room and interest on the investments of the trust. The Trustees do not have a large amount of money; total income in 2013 was only £6,455 pounds and the assets at the end of 2013 were £103,104. With interest rates being so low over recent years, this has seriously affected the amount of money available for maintenance.

The main income for the congregation comes from collections at services, fees for rites of passage and fund raising events. The total congregational income in 2013 was £9,764 and the assets at the end of 2013 were £38,345.

If, after reading this resume, you have any questions, please feel free to approach either of us and we'll try and give an answer.

Peter Bearon – Chairman Chapel Trustees
Vince McCully – Lay Person in Charge/Chairman Congregational Committee

A poem suggested by Iris Wharton, following a visit to John Clare Cottage in Helpstone, Northamptonshire.

I am

I am: yet what I am none cares or knows,
My friends forsake me like a memory lost;
I am the self-consumer of my woes,
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,
Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;
And yet I am! and live with shadows tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
And e'en the dearest--that I loved the best--
Are strange--nay, rather stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod;
A place where woman never smil'd or wept;
There to abide with my creator, God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept:
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
The grass below--above the vaulted sky.

John Clare

Born: 1793, Helpstone, Northamptonshire
Died: 1864, Northampton Asylum

A Topical Item

Floods - anonymous reminiscences

Images to remember: a woman rowing herself about on a piece of wood and trying to get to the butter for breakfast; water obliterating all landmarks; the wretched appearance of rows of houses where the doors and lower windows were half under water and women and children looking out of upper windows and taking food from boats.

The most thoughtless skimmer of newspapers must now wonder how it is that floods are now much more frequent than they used to be. There is seldom a year in which we do not read of disastrous inundations by which sheep are drowned and crops destroyed. The low-lying lands are under water for weeks together and now and then a wall gives way and a well-known tree slopes from its loosened root… After seven or eight weeks of such weather, people's hearts may well sink. For weeks they have not seen sun, moon or star. Dwellings that used to be healthy are now the abode of rheumatism and fever.

The difference between the old times and now is that nature used to manage matters in its own way. Rivers took care of themselves scouring their own channels, deepening their own beds and keeping their outfalls clear. But when men made use of them and tampered with their courses without conserving them, they began to deteriorate. Where now do we see any care taken of the channel of any river in England? Do we remove shoals in the streams and clear away roots of encroaching trees or mend banks or root out spreading weeds? Yet we now require rivers to convey away more than they can carry and so they return the surplus water upon our lands.

Such seasons as this really ought to have stood on record as the very last in which we had to endure evils which it was in man's power to remedy.

This is not, as you might think, from a recent newspaper, but was adapted from a copy of Chambers's Journal dated 1859 found by Dennis Crompton amongst some old books in Rivington Chapel.

Snippets from the Past

Extract from the Bolton Chronicle, Saturday, May 27, 1837

On Saturday last, the far-famed Pike was crowded with visitors, it being computed that not less than 3000 persons ascended the summit. The place resembled a fair, but there were some shades of difference; for on one side might be seen a meeting of primitive methodists, singing hymns, praying, and preaching, and on the other a gay party dancing quadrilles to an excellent band of music; others were playing prison bars; others leaping, and many a fair dame had a roll down the hill. The "teetotallers" were rather at a discount, as an enormous quantity of beer and brown stout was consumed. The weather was fine, but the atmosphere being rather hazy the prospect was limited to a few miles.

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. Chris and Lynne Haighton, who distribute the newsletters, would also be grateful to be kept informed if there are any other amendments that need to be made to the list. Their contact details can be found on the back page of the newsletter.

Alison

Dates for your Diary

Sunday Services at 2:15 PM

4	May	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
18	May	Rev Danny Crosby - Dunham Road and Urmston Anniversary Sermons
1	June	Dr Irving Delamore
15	June	Vincent Bradley - Bank Street Chapel
6	July	Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel
20	July	No Service (Iron Man event) but Chapel open to visitors
3	August	Rev Penny Johnson - Dean Row Chapel

Flower Donors

4	May	Jacqueline Dagnall
18	May	Muriel Jones
1	June	Judith Crompton
15	June	Jo Clark
6	July	Frank Ascroft
20	July	Joan Thursby
3	August	Olive Fisher

If you would like to arrange a ceremony at Rivington Chapel, please contact
Joan Thursby tel: 01204 520264

Other Dates and Ceremonies

Sat 3 May	Rivington Spring Festival and Open Day
Sun 18 May After service	Chapel Congregational Meal Yew Tree Inn, Heath Charnock
Sun 1 June After service	Strawberry Tea
Wed 4 June 4:00pm - 8:00pm	Chapel Gardening Party
Sat 14 June	Wedding of Rebecca Danielle Hopkinson and Gazza Tobias
Sat 21 June 7:00pm	Murder Mystery Evening Village Tearooms
Sat 28 June	Wedding of Stephanie Jane Cornthwaite and Derren Sherratt
Sat 18 July	Wedding of Chelsey Louise Mansell and Ynyr Llwyd

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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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