

# Rivington Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel



Founded 1662

Built 1703

*"Here let no man a stranger be"*



Feb - Apr 2022

[www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk)

Facebook: Rivington Unitarian Chapel

## **Lay Person in Charge's Letter**

Another harsh year for everyone as it looks like this pandemic is going to be with us for some time yet. At least we have had more freedom of movement, having been closed since last January until 6 June when we were again able to worship in Chapel.

In 2020 and again in 2021 we made the difficult decision to hold our carol service by Zoom, and not physically in Chapel. As it is our most popular and well attended service, with numbers in the 120s in 2019, we miss it sorely and so do so many folk in the surrounding community. One such lady was Edith Astle of Blackrod who turned 100 years old in the autumn and, along with her daughter Frances and other family members, attended every year. Sadly, Edith died at home and in company on 1 January, alas another sad story of the pandemic. Edith's funeral will be in Chapel on Tuesday 18 January at 2pm.

Our own community has not been without loss during 2021 as Rev Frank Williams, John Patefield and Mary Hough, all cherished members of our congregation, also passed away. To say that they will be greatly missed is a massive understatement. We lose key members such as these, whom we have been indeed fortunate to call friends, and we ask "where does this leave us?"; poorer for sure. As a pulpit supply preacher to other unitarian congregations in the northwest, I am often asked about how we are doing and what our attendance is, considering our relatively remote location. It is heartening to say that since we opened again for worship in June, our average attendance in Chapel is 16. To put this in context, I have recently conducted services in town centre chapels where numbers have ranged from 6 to 18. Surely a testament to the hard work and commitment of this congregation and our special and welcoming Chapel.

Our trustees have been busy with work on our building and in the

grounds and special mention must be made of Paul Fairclough, buildings manager, Richard Horrocks, chairman (and grant securer) and Peter Bearon, secretary. Between them they have arranged for the felling of dangerous trees in a timely and safe fashion, the Chapel interior has been limewashed and work is well under way on the drains.

This year, depending on pandemic trials and tribulations, we are optimistic that more can be achieved, with two weddings and a naming ceremony already booked. The Rivington Festival on Saturday 7 May is again on the agenda and it has recently been ascertained that the Parish Council would be supportive of improvements to the hard standing between the Chapel and the village green.

This year is also a Pilgrimage year and we have duly been planning ahead for this triennial event. It is set to take place on 1 October, as usual a Saturday, and the Parish Church Hall and caterers have been booked. The speaker at the dinner will be Rev Sue Woolley as President of the GA (General Assembly) and Rev Philip Waldron has kindly accepted our invitation to take the service. Fingers crossed that it can go ahead.

We are not alone and our activities in the future are keenly valued locally. Between the support of the MDA (Manchester District Association), our local community (including Rivington Parish Council) and other bodies such as the Gregson Trust this shall be so. I am confident that our work and worship is set to continue far into the future, at least for as long a place of piety and worship is required in the beautiful surrounds of Rivington and Anglezarke.

I wish everyone a safe, prosperous and peaceful 2022

*Vince*

Lay Person In Charge

## 2022 Calendar

### All events subject to COVID-19 restrictions

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Sun 20 Mar        | Congregational AGM                     |
| Sat 7 May         | Rivington Village Festival             |
| Sun 15 May        | Anniversary Sermons                    |
| Sun 5 June        | Strawberry Tea                         |
| Sat 10 Sept (tbc) | Heritage Open Day and Late Summer Fair |
| Sun 16 Oct        | Harvest Festival                       |
| Sun 18 Dec        | Christmas Carol Service                |

### Chairman's Letter

We've had to make some changes to the Chapel's COVID-19 risk assessment following the introduction of the government's Plan B in December. The main difference which affects us is that the wearing of face coverings in places of worship is once again a legal requirement, unless you are exempt. You are allowed to remove the covering when singing if you wish, but you are recommended to keep it on. Our other precautions, including provision of hand sanitiser and asking people to stay in their pews for after-service refreshments, are still in place.

You'll see from the list of Flower Donors near the back of the newsletter that there are two vacant dates. If anyone would like to provide the flowers on either Sunday 20 March or Sunday 3 April, please let me know.

Sunday 20 March is the date of the Congregational AGM, and we

hope that this year, COVID permitting, the meeting will be in Chapel. As usual, the posts of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee members will be up for election. It would be good to be able to fill all the posts this year, so please give some serious thought over the next few weeks to the possibility of becoming a Chapel committee member.

The General Assembly is hoping to hold the 2022 Annual Meetings in April at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole once again. If the meetings are able to go ahead, I look forward to attending in person this year. I've noticed on the Annual Meetings website that there will be a special subsidised rate for anyone attending for the first time. This has been made possible by a grant from the Bowland Trust. If you are interested in finding out more, please let me know. The website can be found at [www.unitarian.org.uk/annualmeetings](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/annualmeetings)

**Alison Whitaker**  
**Chairman, Congregational Committee**

### **Notice of AGM**

The Annual General Meeting of the Congregation of Rivington Chapel  
will be held after the service on

Sunday 20 March 2022

A Nomination Form for the posts of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer  
and Committee members will be displayed on the notice board in  
Chapel.

The closing date for nominations will be Sunday 6 March 2020

## **Trust Matters**

Unfortunately, the pandemic has returned with a vengeance, which belies my message of hope in the Autumn Newsletter. This has meant, of course, that the Christmas Carol Service was held via Zoom with no live Father Christmas and the requirement of face coverings during services has returned!

Over two Saturdays at the end of November and beginning of December, the Tea Room organised a craft sale and with our permission and under Chris Martin's careful eye, it was agreed that stalls could be set up in the Chapel to supplement those erected in the Tea Room. The event appeared to go well and on the two Saturdays Chris manned a table selling Chapel artefacts including calendars. Monies raised went towards the Chapel's funds. The event was an opportunity to show off the Chapel to visitors who would not normally have the opportunity to see it.

Fortunately maintenance of the Chapel has not stood still and Paul Fairclough oversaw the recent Quinquennial Review inspection by our architect with the addition of a drone inspection of the roofs of both the Chapel and Tea Room. We await the report with interest, but Paul says that the architect appeared to be pleased with the building's state of repair and that we had obviously addressed the major issues identified in the 2016 Review. Once we have received the report and the Trustees have agreed a prioritised plan to address any issues arising, we can claim back the contribution for undertaking the review from the Hibbert Trust.

While no further work has been undertaken on the toilet blockages, although repairs are pending for being completed in 2022, no fur-

ther incidents have been experienced as a consequence of their improved management (outlined in the Autumn Newsletter) by the tenants.

The previously planned work to apply a second coat of lime wash to supplement that applied to the Chapel interior walls last winter (2020) is still in hand and will await the better weather of spring.

**Richard Horrocks**  
**Chairman, Rivington Chapel Trustees**

### **Robert Curwen**

During Autumn 2021, we were contacted by Robert's son Duncan to arrange for the interment of Robert's ashes in the Curwen family grave. Duncan, along with a donation in Robert's memory to Chapel funds, sent us the following information:

'Robert Curwen was the 'little brother' of Elsie Curwen and the last surviving child of Thomas and Jane Curwen who were lifelong supporters of the Chapel.

Thomas and Jane were married at the Chapel in 1928 and had all four of their children baptised there.

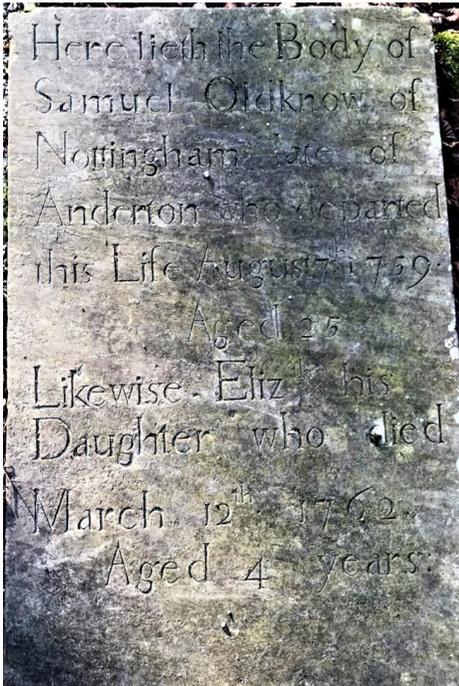
They also had a family pew in the Chapel which probably was the family pew of Jane's parents Ralph and Ann Derbyshire.

Jane was the sister of Florence Woosey who was a Trustee at the Chapel.'

## Two Samuel Oldknows and Rivington Chapel

I was interested to read of Linda Green's recent travels to the Derwent valley in Derbyshire and, in particular, to Belper, home to Jedediah Strutt who built his first timber-framed cotton mill in 1786. The importance of the Arkwright and Strutt families during what is often referred to as the *First Industrial Revolution* in which water power reached the zenith of its importance should not be underestimated. The contributions of contemporaries like Samuel Oldknow (1756–1828), who was credited with introducing machine-made muslins into England as cheaper alternatives to the handmade versions imported by the East India Company, are considered by some to be of equal importance.

The Samuel Oldknow buried in the Chapel churchyard is the father of the more well-known son, who is often known as *Samuel Oldknow of Anderton* because of his birth there after his father moved from Nottingham with his wife, Marjery (née Foster). Unfortunately Samuel Senior died at the early age of 25 in 1759 as indicated on his gravestone which is located the churchyard just below the south window. The gravestone (see opposite) shows him to be *Samuel Oldknow of Nottingham* and it is believed that he was sent to Anderton by his father Thomas Oldknow, who had a draper's shop in Nottingham, to learn the business of cotton manufacture, principally weaving. His marriage to Marjery, daughter of Thomas Foster of Anderton and yeoman at Roscoe Lowe Farm, took place in 1754. There is a belief that some of the first English muslins were woven by Joseph Shaw in Anderton in 1764, which is evidence that earlier intelligence of these developments was the reason that Samuel Senior was required to move there and set up business in 1754, five years before his death. The site of Shaw's cottage is thought to have been on land behind the former Millstone Inn, now a restaurant, where the former Headless Cross House stood.



However, in moving to Anderton and establishing an early interest in textile manufacture, Samuel lay the foundations for his son to develop his own business and in doing so become the first and largest manufacturer of muslins in the British Isles. It is evident that in the five years after moving to Anderton and his untimely death in 1759, Samuel Senior was sufficiently successful to have been able to build a cottage in Anderton with a datestone of 1759 and his and his wife's initial "S O M".

Soon after Samuel's death, Marjery's father also died and she inherited the leasehold of the farm and estates at Roscoe Lowe off Long Lane, now located across the reservoir from Lever Park. The Oldknow family were members of the Chapel and Samuel Junior was educated at Rivington Grammar School and, after his grandfather Thomas's death, went to live at Roscoe Lowe. In due course Samuel Junior was apprenticed to his uncle Thomas in Nottingham and in 1781 was taken into partnership with him. Shortly before this, while retaining his connection with the Nottingham business, it was decided that he should return to Anderton to set up as a manufacturer of cotton goods and fustians (medium to heavy workwear cloths) in association with his brother Thomas, for which he had built a dedicated building at Roscoe. Within two years Samuel's interest focussed on the fine cotton muslin fabrics, most likely as a consequence of the disallowance of Arkwright's patent on his water frame method of spinning fine cotton

yarns in 1781 coupled with the development of Crompton's more efficient mule during the same period. In 1779 he had purchased a number of hand mules from Crompton, which he set up at Roscoe Lowe. Crompton's mule was often termed the *Muslin Wheel* because of its greater suitability for spinning the very fine yarns required to enable manufactured muslins to compete with and be cheaper than imports from India.

At this time, muslin manufacturers like Samuel Junior operated by the *putting out system* in that he would contract local hand weavers to weave his fabrics and also supply them with yarn (or raw cotton if they were spinners as well) sourced from local fine cotton spinners of which there were many in the Bolton district. Initially he sold his fabrics through the Nottingham shop but soon the major market for his goods moved from Nottingham to London, selling through firms such as Messrs. S. & W. Salte, who would identify the developing fashions and define the fabrics required to take advantage of these. Such was the success of Samuel Junior's business that he started to use weavers in the Stockport area, where a cotton boom was taking place, and after receiving a loan of £3,000 from Richard Arkwright, moved his business there in 1784. By 1786 he was employing over 300 weavers who possessed about 500 looms and his profits for that and the subsequent year were £17,000! The need for high quality yarn in sufficient quantity became of paramount importance and so having already erected a mill for fine spinning in Stockport in the late 1780s, he bought land at Mellor to build a 6-storeyed brick mill, which was completed in about 1793 or later. This was reputedly one of the largest mills in England at the time. Meanwhile, he had also acquired business interests in Heaton Mersey to enable him to bleach and print his cloth as well as other smaller establishments to

finish it, all within the Stockport area. In fact, the historical record suggests that by this time he had interests in over 20 mills, including some smaller spinning mills, which might appear to suggest that Oldknow had overstretched himself by this stage. However, during the 1792-3 period, the muslin industry became depressed partly as a consequence of the war with France. Because Oldknow's business largely depended on credit and to avoid bankruptcy, he had to mortgage his estates in Mellor and Marple to Richard Arkwright Junior for a loan considered to be in the region of £11,000. He also had to sell other operations including his original one at Anderton. This downturn in his business affairs had an unfortunate effect on his personal ones – just before this time, he had become engaged to marry the daughter (and heiress) of Peter Drinkwater, a textile manufacturer of Manchester. The engagement was called off because his future father-in-law became concerned at the state of his business and Oldknow died a bachelor.

However, all was not lost and while his business contracted, he concentrated his interest at Mellor, operating his mill and developing farming interests to supply his workforce with meat and vegetables. He also built housing and as a consequence was known to be a good employer. He was an active promoter of the construction of the Peak Forest Canal and the Peak Forest Tramway and his warehouse exists to this day on the banks of former in the Marple lock system. However, his ventures never really made a profit and while he served as High Sheriff of Derbyshire in 1824, his debts were over £200,000 at the time of his death in 1828, after which his factory and estate passed to the Arkwrights. He is buried at Church of All Saints, Marple.

**Richard Horrocks**

## **Unitarian Humour**

*As related by Rev Danny Crosby in a recent edition of 'The Inquirer' magazine*

A vicar, a priest and a Unitarian minister were travelling together to an ecumenical lunch in order to save petrol money. Sadly, on the way, they were involved in a fatal car crash. There was some good news, however, as they all made it to heaven - even the Unitarian - which surprised them all.

When they arrived they were all asked, 'When you are in your coffin, and your friends, family and members of your congregation are mourning over you, what would you like to hear them say?'

The vicar said, 'I would like to hear them say that I was a wonderful husband, a great family man and a fine spiritual leader.'

The priest said, 'I would like to hear that I was a wonderful teacher and a servant of God who made a huge difference in people's lives.'

The Unitarian minister said, 'I would like to hear them say, "Look, he's moving."'

## **A thought**

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the concerns of all humanity.

**The Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr**

## **Publications**

Please contact Chris Martin (01257 483702, email: [chris\\_and\\_june@hotmail.com](mailto:chris_and_june@hotmail.com)) if you would like to buy any of the various Rivington Chapel publications, details of which can be found on the website: [www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk/publications](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk/publications)

Chris is now collecting images for next year's calendar and will be doing so until August. Please send any you think might be suitable to the email address above for consideration. Any good 'wintry' ones would be especially welcome as he is also considering doing another Christmas Card run.

## **Donations**

Although the Chapel is now open for services, there will still be some of you who will not be able to attend or who prefer to avoid using cash. If you wish to contribute what you would have put in the collection you can still do so via CAFDonate.

You can either follow the Donations link on our website [www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk) or go directly to <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/12556>

## **A Note from the Editor**

If you need to inform us of any change in your details, or if you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please contact me, either by emailing [newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk) or phoning 01942 816569.

Also, please email if you would like to help us reduce the cost of printing and posting the newsletter by opting to have an e-mail version rather than a paper copy. You can read this and past issues online at [www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk](http://www.rivingtonchapel.org.uk).

## Dates for your Diary

### Sunday Services at 2:15 PM

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 6 February  | Graeme Pilbrough - Padiham Chapel            |
| 20 February | Chrissie Wilkie - Dean Row Chapel            |
| 5 March     | Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel             |
| 20 March    | Geoff Levermore - Norcliffe Chapel           |
| 3 April     | Jean Clements - Denton Chapel                |
| 17 April    | Rev Charles VanDenBroeder - Retired (Monton) |
| 1 May       | Vince McCully - Rivington Chapel             |

### Flower Donors

|             |                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 6 February  | Alison Whitaker & Peter Bearon |
| 20 February | Iris Wharton                   |
| 5 March     | Diane Fairclough               |
| 20 March    | tba                            |
| 3 April     | tba                            |
| 17 April    | Olive Fisher                   |
| 1 May       | Mary Horrocks                  |

## Other Dates and Ceremonies

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Sun 13 February<br>12:00      | Naming Ceremony - Nathaniel Michael John<br>Dean, son of Kate and Benjamin Chapman<br>Conducted by Vince McCully |
| Sun 20 March<br>After Service | Congregational AGM   |

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If you would like to arrange a ceremony at Rivington  
Chapel, please contact Alison or Vince  
Contact details overleaf

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**Copy date for next issue: 1 Apr 2022**  
**Issue date: 17 Apr 2022**

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telephone: 01942 816569

email: [newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk)

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.

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Lay Person in Charge & Pulpit Supply              | Vince McCully<br>20 Thirlmere Close, Anderton, Lancashire, PR6 9QD<br>01257 483733<br>email: vinmcul@hotmail.co.uk             |  |
| <b><i>Your Committee</i></b>                      |  |  |
| Chairman<br>Newsletter<br>Editor &<br>Flower Rota | Alison Whitaker<br>14 Church Street, Westhoughton, Bolton, BL5 3RS<br>01942 816569<br>email: newsletter@rivingtonchapel.org.uk |  |
| Secretary   | Position vacant  |  |
| Treasurer &<br>Chapel Keeper                      | Frank Ascroft<br>13a Highfield Road North, Adlington, Lancashire, PR6 9RN<br>01257 483635<br>email: ascroftf@pobroadband.co.uk |  |
| Other<br>Committee<br>Members                     | Jacqueline Dagnall<br>Paul & Diane Fairclough<br>Mary Horrocks   | 01204 691833<br>01257 474761<br>01204 493757               |
| <b><i>Other Contact Details</i></b>               |  |  |
| Publicity<br>Officer                              | Jacqui Kershaw   | email: jacqui@analpa.co.uk<br>01704 821854<br>07857 354192 |