

25. The New Room, Bristol

As the Methodist heritage site with the strongest links with Charles Wesley, Bristol made the most of the 300th anniversary of his birth, celebrating in particular his outstanding contribution to hymnody. Following on from the Hymn Competition Awards and Flower Festival in May, Charles Wesley's House at 4 Charles Street received nearly 1,000 visitors over Bristol Open Doors Weekend in September. New Room Stewards and Friends enjoyed Mark Topping as John Wesley speaking of his brother Charles - "my own familiar friend" - in October. John Bell of the Iona Community led a Big Sing including several of Charles' hymns in November. There was a concert of Music by Charles Wesley Junior for his 250th birthday and a Carol Service to mark Charles' own 300th birthday. The New Room was also a focus for marking Abolition 200, John's sermon against Slavery proving a best-seller in 2007 and Charles' repeated insistence that salvation is for "all" making a strong witness for justice in this city whose fortunes were built on the triangular trade.

Inevitably, 2008 feels less "special", but new initiatives include "Holiday at Home" days for senior citizens and lunchtime interviews with well known Bristol personalities. Wesley May Week events will be limited to 17/18 May to avoid the Spring Bank Holiday weekend. (See the website www.newroombristol.org.uk) A great deal of work has gone into achieving full accreditation as a museum. As from September 2008 there will be one Bristol Circuit to which the New Room will be central, instead of being in a no-man's land between Circuits. This gives an opportunity for a greater sense of ownership and of mission potential.

In January 2008 the Trustees commissioned *Reckless Orchard* to prepare a business plan, aimed at maximising the New Room's contribution as an oasis of peace and spiritual reflection in an otherwise frenetic shopping centre, which, by the end of 2008 with the completion of Cabot Circus, the new £500m retail development adjacent to Broadmead, is forecast to have an annual footfall of 35m. Our plan is to develop the courtyards at either end of the chapel as walled gardens with interpretative murals and the provision of a cafe serving simple, wholesome refreshments. It will involve roofing over the alleyway, providing improved toilet facilities and relocating the shop from 1st floor to ground floor. Detailed discussion with the City Council, Broadmead developers and neighbours and the Connexional Property Office is taking place and fund-raising is in process towards the first phase - the "greening" of the Broadmead courtyard.

The Trustees are grateful for the support being offered by the Connexion in a variety of ways. Increased co-operation between heritage sites and the strategic and conservation advice provided by Ken Wales, Ken Start and David Lovie are appreciated, as is the appointment of The Revd Dr Tim Macquiban to prepare an overarching report on Methodist heritage sites and policy to Conference 2008.

David Worthington has continued to serve us admirably as Administrator/Project Manager with the backing of many dedicated volunteers and people with specialist skills whom we can call on. His contract has been extended for a further two years to November 2010. David Weeks as Warden has worked hard to raise the profile within the Bristol District, while the Deputy Warden, Gordon James, is

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masterminding the experimental moving of the shop to the ground floor vestry. Mrs Joyce Brown, who has co-ordinated the “Friends of the New Room” is stepping down as a Trustee as well as from that role. This year Dr John Vickers is retiring from the Board of Trustees, but fortunately his historical scholarship will still be available to the Connexion.

List of Trustees (as from 1 September 2008) - denoting officers

Revd A Ward Jones (Chair), Revd Dr Jonathan H Pye (Vice-Chair), Revd David G Weeks (Warden), Revd Gordon James (Deputy Warden), Ms Jane Allin, Mr T David Bainbridge (Property Secretary - New Room), Mr David G Baker, Mr Gary Best, Mrs Clare Champion-Smith, Mrs Jenny Carpenter (Hon Secretary), Mr Philip Carter (Director of Music), Dr James Gibbs, Mrs Constance Gould (Co-ordinator of Volunteers), Mrs Barbara Hickling (Hon Secretary of Management Committee), Mr Martin R Hunt, Mrs Rachel Newton (Charles Wesley House and Drama). Mr John Powlesland (Hon Treasurer), Revd Colin C Short (representing Archives & History Committee), Mr Richard Street, Revd C Norman Wallwork.

Statement of Financial Activity for Year Ending 31st August 2007

Income and Expenditure

Incoming Resources		Resources Expended	
Donations etc.	19,683	Salaries etc.	22,612
Sale of Goods etc.	16,334	Maintenance of Property	27,404
Investments/Interest	9,924	Administration	12,170
Rent	21,175	Other	19,248
Other	<u>35,770</u>	Net Incoming Resources	<u>21,452</u>
Total	102,886	Total	102,886

Balance on Hand

Balance as at 1st September 2006	229,400
Plus Net Incoming Resources	21,452
Less Loss on Investments	(6,076)
Balance as at 31st August 2007	244,776

Balance Sheet

Fixed Assets	185,864	Current Liabilities	1,689
Current Assets	<u>60,601</u>	Total Assets	<u>244,776</u>
Total	246,465		246,465

*****RESOLUTION**

25/1. The Conference receives the Report.