

NATIONAL OR CONNEXIONAL RECORDS OF METHODISM

Records about the District Synods, the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Church, national officers and Departments of the Methodist Church are not usually found in County record Offices or in other local depositories.

The largest collection of Methodist Connexional records have been deposited at the John Rylands University Library in Manchester. The Methodist Conference of 1961 set up the Methodist Archives and Research Centre [MARC]. This was originally located at Wesley's Chapel in City Road, London, but was transferred to Manchester in 1977. The archives contain over 60,000 records printed records and several hundred thousand manuscripts, relating to all the branches of Methodism that existed before Methodist Union in 1932 as well as over 1300 items particularly relating to John Wesley.

The Connexional records are of most help to researchers carrying out in-depth research on Methodism and to family and local historians who are interested in the history of a particular Chapel or Circuit. There are good collections of Methodist Chapel histories and Methodist newspapers and journals, which contain much biographical information about ministers, local preachers and prominent Methodist laymen. Other records include preaching plans, Methodist periodicals, Methodist fiction and obituaries.

The MARC also has complete sets of the Minutes of Conference of all the branches of Methodism. These have been published annually following each Conference since 1744, but their value to family historians is largely limited to the lists of stations of all ministers, active and retired, and detailed obituaries of ministers who have died since the last Conference.

Researchers are welcome to use the library facilities at the John Rylands Library but are advised to contact the Keeper of the Methodist Collections - Dr Peter Nockles [0161 275 3778] or e-mail peter.nockles@man.sc.uk. A letter of reference and some form of identity is required for the first visit so that a Readers' Ticket can be issued. N.B. The John Rylands Library is closed for major refurbishment during 2006 during which time there is very limited access to the Methodist Connexional records at the Manchester University Library in Deansgate. Researchers are advised to telephone 0161 275 3751 before planning a visit or visit the Library website for the most up to date information on the refurbishment programme.

The Wesley and Methodist Studies Centre based at Oxford Brookes University, houses the second most important printed collection relating to British Methodism. The Centre has a good collection of local histories, chapel histories, Methodist newspapers and journals and has the advantage of being within easy reach of the Midlands and Home Counties and being a smaller centre can offer a more personal service to visitors. It also houses the archives of Westminster College, which used to be a male teacher training college in Horseferry Road, Westminster. Visitors are welcome but prior booking is advised via Dr Peter Forsaith, Methodist Heritage Co-ordinator, Wesley and Methodist Studies Centre, Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill, Oxford. OX2 9AT [Tel:01865 488319] or e-mail pforsaith@brookes.ac.uk.

Wesley's Chapel in City Road, London contains the Museum of Methodism in the crypt where many artefacts associated with John Wesley and early Methodist leaders can be seen. Next door is Wesley's House built at the same time as the Chapel. It was here that John Wesley slept when in London and also where he died on March 2nd, 1791. Behind Wesley's Chapel is a Methodist Burial ground

where John Wesley was buried on March 9th at 5a.m. 5450 other burials took place here between 1779 and 1854. These have been transcribed and indexed by the London and North Middlesex Family History Society and are available for purchase in a set of microfiche from the Society's Bookstall Manager. Across City Road from Wesley's Chapel is Bunhill Fields, a large Nonconformist burial ground containing the grave of Susannah Wesley, John Wesley's mother.

Englesea Brook, near Crewe in Cheshire is the location for the Museum of Primitive Methodism. It houses the finest collection of British Primitive Methodist records. These include a large collection of PM Circuit plans listing ministers, local preachers and chapel officers; a Library of PM literature which includes bound copies of PM Magazines and a complete set of PM Minutes of Conferences from 1819-1932.

Englesea Brook is open from April - November on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Bank Holiday Mondays from 10.30am - 5.15pm each day and on Sundays from 1.30pm - 5.15pm. Visits at other times can be made by arrangement. There is a cottage with self-catering facilities nearby for visitors who wish to extend their research. Enquiries are welcome via the Warden, [01782 810109] or at the Museum [01270 820836]
e-mail engleseabrook-methodist-museum@supanet.com.

The New Room - John Wesley's Chapel in Broadmead, Bristol - is the oldest Methodist Chapel in the world. Built in 1739 it is open throughout the year on Mondays - Saturdays from 10.00am- 4.00pm each day. Further information can be obtained by telephoning 0117 926 4740. It does not contain much Methodist archival material.

The Family Records Centre holds a microfilm copy of the Wesleyan Methodist Metropolitan Registry which contains 10,341 baptismal certificates, which were, registered at the Wesleyan Methodist Register Office, 66 Paternoster Row, near St Paul's Church, London between 1818 and 1840. There is an index - RG4/4680 and the certificates can be located in RG4/4677,4678 and 4679. This Registry is separate from the 856 Baptismal Registers that were surrendered to the Registrar General in 1837, which can also be seen at the FRC.

The British Library Newspaper Library at Colindale in North London, has extensive collections of Methodist newspapers including The Watchman [1835-1884], The Methodist Times, [1885-1932] The Primitive Methodist [1868-1932] and The Methodist Recorder [1861 to date].

The Archives at Westminster Methodist Central Hall in London contain the unique Wesleyan Methodist Historic Roll. This is a good starting off point to see if any of your ancestors may have been Wesleyan Methodists c.1900, provided you have a good idea where they were living at that time. The Historic Roll contains the names of more than one million donors who contributed to the Twentieth Century Fund (sometimes called the Million Guinea Fund) between 1898 and 1900.

Other important sources include Hills' Arrangements - lists of Ministers and their stations compiled by Rev William Hill in 1819 but updated to 1988.

The Circuits of Great Britain, 1765 - 1885 compiled by Rev Joseph Hall since updated to 1980 - also located at the John Rylands Library.

Ministers and Circuits of the Primitive Methodist Connexion - Rev William Leary [1990] - published.

The United Methodist Church, Ministers and Circuits - Dr Oliver A Beckerlegge [1968] - published.

Who's Who in Methodism, 1933 - ministers and laymen in Methodism at the time of Methodist Union – published.

The Methodist Preacher's Who's Who, 1934 - names 25,000 preachers living at the time of publication.

If you are still unsure where to locate Methodist records, contact the County Record Office nearest to the town or village where your ancestors lived after 1750. If they can't give you the answer, they can often refer you to a Methodist District Archivist or Circuit Archivist who may be able to help.

METHODIST RECORDS BIBLIOGRAPHY

Selected Bibliography

Leary, William	My Ancestor was a Methodist	SOG 3 rd Edition 1999
Tabraham, Barrie	The Making of Methodism	Epworth Press 1995
Shaw, Thomas	Methodist Guide to Cornwall	MPA
Turner, John Mursley	Modern Methodism in England 1932 – 1998	Epworth Press 1998
Leary, William and Vickers, John A	Methodist Guide to Lincolnshire and East Anglia	MPH
Idle, Christopher	The Journal of John Wesley (Abridged)	Lion Publishing 1986
Edwards, John; Gentry, Peter; Thorne, Roger;	Methodist Guide to Bristol and the South West	MPH
Vickers, John and Young, Belty	Methodist Guide to London and the Sout East	MPH
Gordon, S Wakefield	John Wesley	Foundery Press (1990)
Greetham, Mary and Peter	Samuel Wesley of Epworth	Foundery Press (1990)
Vickers, John A	Charles Wesley	Foundery Press (1990)
Greetham, Mary	Susanna Wesley, Mother of Methodism	Foundery Press (1994)
Maser, Frederick E	The Wesley Sisters	Foundery Press (1990)
Toppling, Mark	The New Room – John Wesley's Chapel, Bristol	Jarrold Publishing 2004
	Wesley's Chapel	Pitkin Guide 2001

Methodist Heritage – annually published booklet – MPH or via Peter S Forsaith – Methodist Heritage Convenor, 66 Besselsleigh Road, Wootton, Oxon OX13 6DX e-mail Methodist-heritage@forsaith-oxon.demon.co.uk.

Useful Addresses – a select list

1. Museum of Methodism, Wesley's Chapel, 49 City Road, London EC1Y 1AU
www.wesleyschapel.org.uk Tel: 020 7253 2262
2. Methodist Central Hall Archives, Storey's Gate, London SW1H 9NH
www.c-h-w.com Tel: 020 7654 3825 or 3826
email: visitorservices@c-h-w.co.uk
3. New Room (John Wesley's Chapel) Bristol, 36 The Horsefair, Bristol BS1 3JE
<http://newroombristol.org.uk> Tel: 0117 926 4740
4. Wesley College, Bristol, college Park Drive, Henbury Road, Bristol BS10 7QD
e-mail admin@wesley-college-bristol.ac.uk (Library of Wesleyana pre 1851 books)
5. Museum of Cornish Methodism
Carharrack, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 5RB Tel: 01209 820381 for appointment to research collecting Cornish Methodist History
6. Museum of Primitive Methodists, Englesea Brook, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 5QW
englesabrook-methodist-museum@supranet.com
7. Epworth – The Old Rectory, 1 Rectory Street, Epworth, Near Doncaster, S Yorkshire DN9 1HX
e-mail curator@epwortholdrectory.org.uk
8. Wesley Centre, Oxford
Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford OX2 9AT
<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/education/wco/msuindex.html>!
Tel: 01865 488286 e-mail wco.archives@brookes.ac.uk
9. Mow Cop – The Chapel Museum
Hillside, Chapel Bank, Mow Cop, Stoke-on-Trent ST7 3NA
Contact John Anderson Tel: 01782 522004
10. Black Country – Wednesbury Central Methodist Church
Springhead, Wednesbury, West Midlands WS10 9AD
Contact Minister Tel: 01928 683 143 Collection of books about Wednesbury Riots of 1743/4
11. Manchester – John Rylands University Library – Methodist Archives,
Oxford Road, Manchester M3 3EH
<http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data1/dg/text/method.html>
Tel: 0161 834 5343 e-mail gareth.lloyd@manchester.ac.uk
12. Newcastle-upon-Tyne – Brunswick Methodist Church
Brunswick Place, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 7BJ
e-mail rev.terry@cwcom.net Tel: 0191 232 1692
memorabilia available on request – prior appointment needed.
13. Halifax – Mount Zion Methodist Church
Upper Brockholes, Per Lane, Ogden, Halifax HX2 8X6
www.mountzionhalifax.org.uk Tel: 01422 844364
e-mail Irene.cunliffe@btoopenworld.com