

# Methodist Archives Newsletter – Winter 2023/2024 Edition

## Editor – Jon Purcell (Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives)

**Welcome** to this Winter 2023/24 edition of the Archivist's Newsletter. This is my last newsletter as my 6 year term of office ends on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. Before I hand over Mary Ellis who takes up post on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 as Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives, I would like to thank colleagues from across the Connexion who have contributed to this and previous edition of this newsletter. Your help has been much appreciated.

I would also like to thank all the volunteer archivists who do such excellent for the Church as both District, Circuit and Church level. I hope you all have a blessed and well-deserved break over the Christmas and New Year break.

Some the features of this edition include:-

- An introduction to new members of the Methodist Heritage Team who will be working with you.
- News of a Working Group established by the Archives and Records Advisory Group (ARAG) to assess the current operation of Methodist archives at both District and Circuit levels and to make recommendations for how our Archives service can be developed and improved.
- An introduction to the Archives of the Methodist Church in Ireland
- Information about the Lancashire Online Parish Clerks organisation who are engaged in digitising parish and church records in the North West of England.
- Some information about the Methodist Modern Art Collection and some upcoming exhibitions.
- News about 'Heritage News' one of the many ways in which we are hoping to use both traditional and social media to communicate news and developments in Methodist heritage.

Jon Purcell. Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives.

### Methodist Heritage Team Update

Since the last edition of this Archivist's newsletter, we have welcomed three new members of the Heritage Team and they now introduce themselves:-

#### **Professor Charles Forsdick. Chair of ARAG (The Archives and Records Advisory Group)**

Charles Forsdick has recently been appointed as a member of the Methodist Heritage Committee and chair of ARAG. Brought up in Norfolk in what was then the Dereham and Swaffham Methodist Circuit, he studied in Oxford and Lancaster and spent two years living in Brittany before beginning his academic career in Glasgow in 1995. Charles has recently been elected Drapers Professor of French at the University of Cambridge. He is also a Fellow of Murray Edwards College, home to the Women's Art Collection, the largest collection of modern and contemporary art by women in Europe. His research and teaching focus primarily on French outside France, and he has a particular interest in postcolonial literature and colonial history.

Writing a PhD on the French traveller Victor Segalen led him to spend time in the early 1990s in the London Missionary Society archives at SOAS, where he had a particular interest in the holdings on Polynesia. Before moving to his current post, Charles was for over 20 years James Barrow Professor of French at the University of Liverpool. In Liverpool, he was a founder member of the Centre for the Study of International Slavery, a collaboration between the University of Liverpool and the International Slavery Museum.

Charles has published widely on the Haitian Revolution and currently work on debates in France, the UK and the USA relating to the memorialization of slavery. His own research falls squarely into the area of heritage studies. He served recently as Principal Investigator on a Franco-British project on dark tourism (working with heritage sites relating to penal colonies and the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi) as well as being Co-Investigator on a major Global Challenge Research Fund Network+ project, 'The Anti-Slavery Knowledge Network' (working with partners including the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board).

Much of Charles's current engagement work relates to institutional legacies of enslavement and unfree labour. His ongoing collaboration with Unilever's Art, Archives and Records Management (UARM) team explores the use by Lever Bros of unfree labour in the Belgian Congo and Solomon Islands in the early twentieth century. Another recent project in Liverpool with researchers in Architecture, supported by the Higher Education Innovation Fund, has permitted completion of a broader scoping study of archive resources relating to Africa in the North West of England.

Charles is looking forward to working with members of ARAG and its wider stakeholder community, and is particularly committed to encouraging the use of collections in support of the priorities and calling of the Methodist Church. He is also looking forward to chairing ARAG and learning more about the Methodist Archivist's network in Britain.

#### **Olivia Threlkeld. Heritage and Collections Officer.**

Olivia is an arts and heritage professional from Mossley (Greater Manchester) although she has lived in London for the past five years – originally relocating to undertake a History of Art MA at University College London. She has worked in a number of different galleries and museums, starting out at Gallery Oldham and more recently at the Museum of Brands, The British Museum and the National Gallery, London.

In addition to her role at the Church overseeing heritage, Olivia also enables the touring of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Although her experience is with artefacts she is enjoying getting to grips with the records and archives of the Church and discovering its potential for mission, engagement and outreach. She has heard some amazing stories from the archives, bookshelves and safes/strongrooms since she started at the beginning of 2023 and is looking forward to hearing more. Olivia would really like to hear stories connected with your church buildings, congregations and of course archives and can be contacted at [threlkeldo@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:threlkeldo@methodistchurch.org.uk)

#### **Samantha Parfitt. Liaison Officer for Methodist Collections.**

Hello everyone, my name is Samantha Parfitt and I'm new to the role of Liaison Officer for Methodist Collections. I have a keen interest in history, particularly the Renaissance and Georgian eras and am currently employed as a Lay Worker attached to the oldest working Methodist Chapel in the East Anglia District. I am also a Church Steward to a Methodist Society currently going through the process of ceasing to meet, which is certainly giving me firsthand experience transitioning to a closed building and the steps that are involved. My role as Liaison Officer is a port of call for

enquiries relating to portable objects and artefacts, including advising on using Artefacts for Mission. I'm looking forward to contributing to the preservation and promotion of the richness of the heritage which the Methodist Church has, working alongside colleagues such as Jon and Mary in the role of Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives. You can contact me directly by email at [sammi.1980@live.co.uk](mailto:sammi.1980@live.co.uk)

With every blessing of the season,

Samantha

**Mary Ellis. Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives.**

Mary is a professional archivist. She began her career with the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts before moving to work as the Programme Director for the Archive Administration and Records Management courses at the Department of Information Studies at Aberystwyth University. She is currently head of Libraries and Archives Development in the Culture Division of Welsh Government.

Mary's family have a long association with Methodism and through family stories she developed an interest in the history of the church. Mary is delighted to be appointed as the new LOMA and she is looking forward to working with and supporting the volunteer District and Circuit Archivists in the valuable work they do to preserve the archival records of the church.