A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light green sweater with a darker green pattern, is shown in profile from the chest up. She is looking intently at a large, ornate, gold-framed painting. The painting depicts a religious scene, possibly the Last Supper, with several figures seated around a table in a dark, classical setting. The frame is highly decorative with intricate scrollwork. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

The Oxford Centre
for Methodism and
Church History

Annual Report
2021/22

**Report on the activities of
The Oxford Centre for Methodism
and Church History, 2021-22.**

**OXFORD
BROOKES
UNIVERSITY**



Oxford Centre for
**Methodism and
Church History**

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Cover image: A student hanging 'That Bedesman, Old' (from The Smetham Collection).

Rear cover: The newly re-framed portrait of John Wesley by Kate Gray (Westminster College Collection).

General Updates

1.1 The Past Year

2021-22 has been another productive year for the Centre. The Coronavirus Pandemic has continued to have an impact on our working practices; and on the types of outputs we are able to achieve. In spite of this, 2021-22 has also be an extremely successful year for the Centre. We have been able to host, organise, and attend both online and in-person events; return to primarily working on-campus; and engage with others as part of work with individuals and visiting groups. We have been able to welcome researchers back to our Reading Room, and also to visit other archives or heritage sites as part of our wider work and research.

The Centre continues to work with an increasing number of external partners, ranging in involvement from The Methodist Church and The Westminster Society; to The Manchester Wesley Research Centre and Wesley House, Cambridge; and newer partnerships, such as with The Methodist Insurance Company, and Southlands College (University of Roehampton). We continue to also work with, and to support, our collection owners, working closely with the Avec Consultancy Trust regarding the development of their archive; with the Methodist Philatelic Society over the deposit of their collection, and financing of a new bursary; and, as ever, with the Wesley Historical Society, with a focus on the growth and development of their collections and space allocation, particularly at this time of transition for the Society.

Digitisation and online engagement continued to play an extensive, and growing, role in our work this past year - with almost 2,000 additional items now available online, and over 1 million views have now been achieved across our online collections.

External to their work with the Centre, staff remain involved with several different initiatives, ranging from the production of local newsletters (Forsaith), through to serving as the Youth Commissioner for their local Scouts district (Dobson). Notably, Professor Gibson serves as a council member of the Oxfordshire Records Society, and is currently involved in arranging their AGM and book launch, both of which will be held at Harcourt Hill in October 2022, and will also include an exhibition of some of the Centre's holdings.

This Report serves to illustrate much of the hard work completed by the Centre this past year, and also the impressive impact this is having - particularly in an increasingly digital field.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM GIBSON

Director,
The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History
Oxford Brookes University.

1.2 Staffing Updates and Changes

The staffing of the Centre remained stable in 2021-22, and throughout the latest period of the pandemic staff worked from home on publications; digitisation; and other projects.

In July 2022, the Centre Administrator, Rachel Atkins, left her role at the University. We are very grateful for all of her hard work whilst in this role, especially during the difficulties of the past two years. Rachel was especially efficient, and excellent at ensuring that Centre staff were informed about changes and updates within the wider Faculty. Her role is currently vacant whilst a successor is recruited.



Professor William Gibson
OCMCH Director
Professor of Ecclesiastical History

WGibson@brookes.ac.uk



Dr Peter Forsaith
OCMCH Research Fellow

PForsaith@brookes.ac.uk



Dr Daniel Reed
OCMCH Public Engagement Manager
Research Fellow

D.Reed@brookes.ac.uk



Thomas Dobson
OCMCH Collections & Digitisation Officer
OBU PhD Student

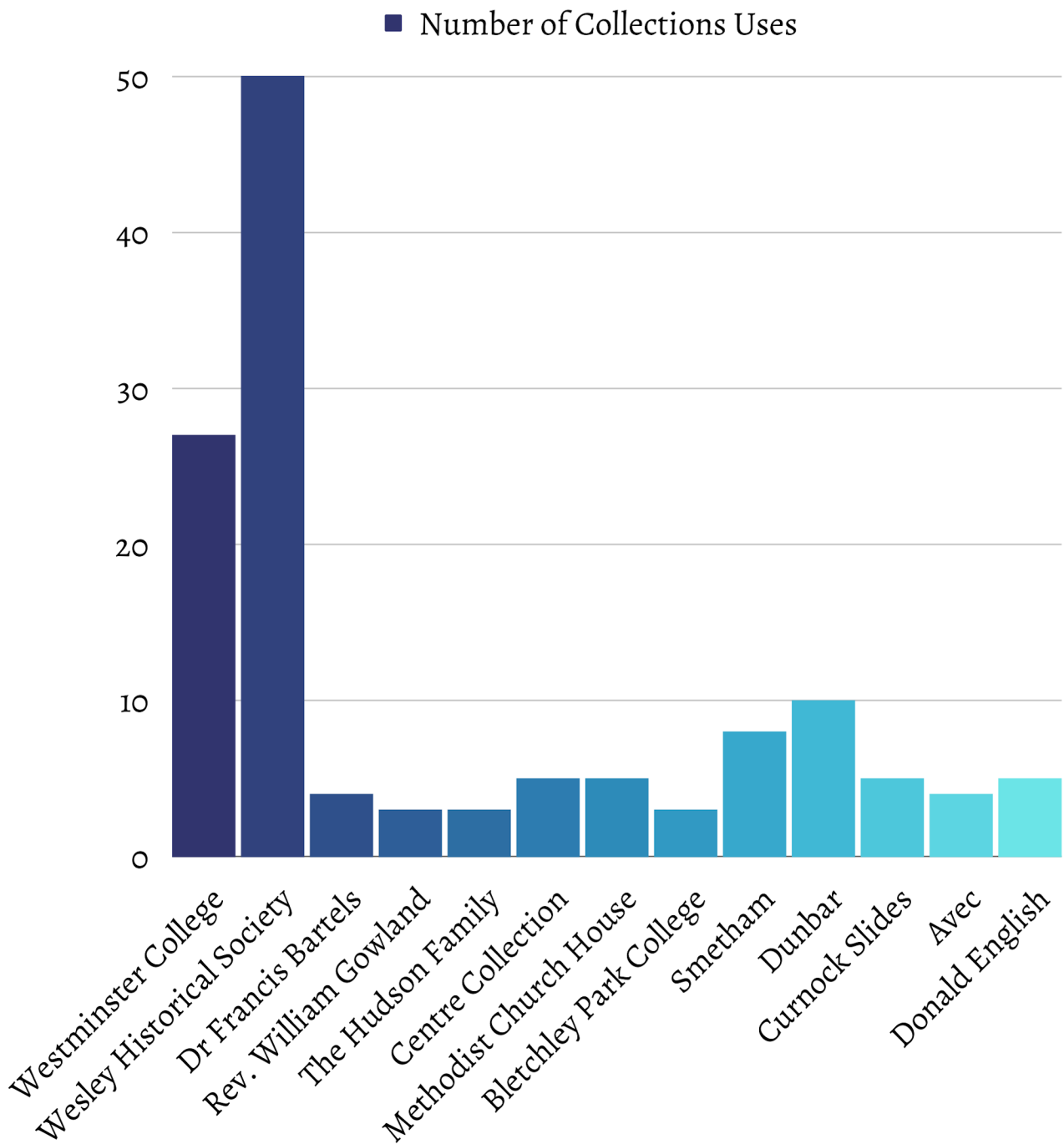
TDobson@brookes.ac.uk

Collections

2.1 Use and Development

2.1.1 Use of our Collections

Whilst in-person use of our collections is relatively low following the Centre's reopening after lockdown, engagement with our material remains high. The uses of our collections have been outlined below. (This does not include online engagement, nor engagement by staff or Dr. John Lenton, the Honorary Librarian of the Wesley Historical Society until July of this year.)



2.1.2 Collections Development

Whilst the primary Collections Report is generated and submitted to the Westminster College Oxford Trust in March, to accompany the completion of updated information relating to their insurance, it seems appropriate to include reference to their development in this Report. Collections which have seen improvements to their storage, and/or access, include:

- The Westminster College collections
- The Wesley Historical Society collections
- The sketchbooks of Evelyn Dunbar
- The Smetham Collection
- The Hudson family collection
- The archive of Dr Francis Bartels.

Most notably, 2021/22 saw the glazing of 'Westminster College' (John Piper, 1948), which was funded by a private individual. We have also had the Westminster College portrait of John Wesley by Kate Gray (great-great granddaughter of Charles Wesley) reframed, enabling it to be displayed.

In addition to this, several collections are now more extensively listed or fully catalogued. These lists and catalogues both assist staff when discussing the further development of collections, and in enabling access to material by researchers when the collections lists and catalogues are finalised.

Despite 'retiring' from his role as Honorary Librarian of the Wesley Historical Society this year, Dr John Lenton continues to work on the development and listing of their archive holdings. Assisted by Centre staff, and the overall sorting of all of our collections, the Wesley Historical Society has now been able to create a single archives collection in the main Centre stacks.

The Centre would also like to reiterate our thanks to Dr Lenton for all his work as the Honorary Librarian of the Wesley Historical Society, a role he has held since 2002. He remains on as 'Assistant Honorary Librarian, with the main librarianship now held by Dr Clive Norris.

2.2 Exhibitions



Image: One of the exhibitions created by Oxford Brookes Art History students, May 2022.

- 'The Library at 50', October 2021

An exhibition exploring the history of the Westminster College Library created to mark the 50th anniversary since the opening of the new Library on 20 October 1971.

- 'An Act of Remembrance', November 2021

Created to accompany the Service of Remembrance in the Westminster Chapel, this exhibition looked at some of the Westminsterians who engaged with war - primarily the First and Second World Wars.

- 'An Archival Advent'. December 2021

An exhibition created to accompany the Centre's #ArchivalAdvent on Social Media, this exhibition displayed some of the more rare items from our collections, as well as those with a festive theme.

- 'Treasures of the Centre', February-March 2022

Created to accompany the Oxford Brookes Applicant Day, this exhibition displayed some of the more famous items from our collections, as well as those which best show the breadth of our holdings.

The return to work at Harcourt Hill, as well as a return to in-person events, has led to an increase in the number of physical exhibitions it has been able to host. Six exhibitions have been organised in the past year in addition to those created by Curatorial Practice students.

These exhibitions were:

- 'A Celebration of Westminster', September-October 2021

Created to accompany the Westminster Society Reunion.

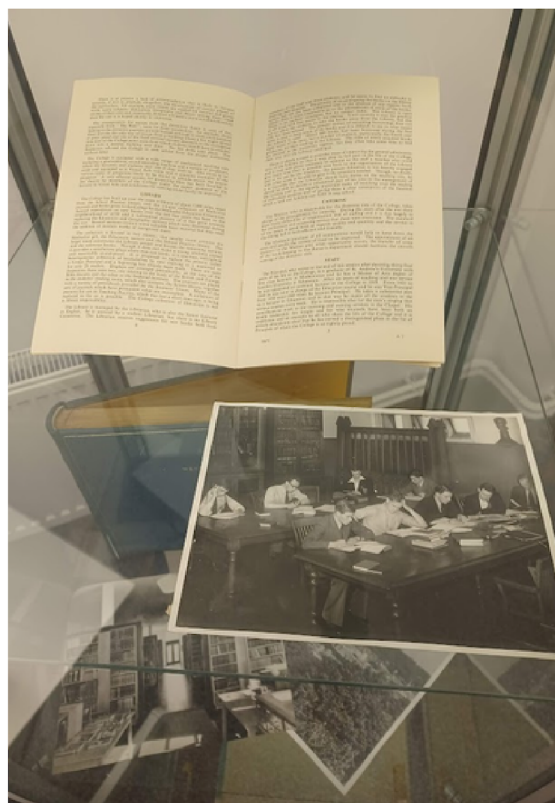


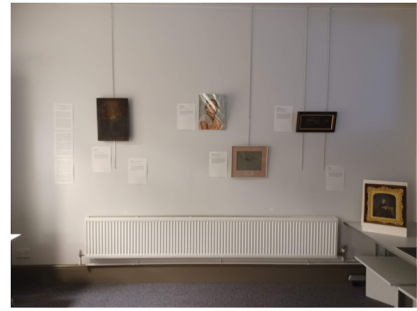
Image: Part of the 'Library at 50' Exhibition.

- *History of Art 'Curatorial Practice' exhibitions (six exhibitions), April-May 2022*

These exhibitions were curated by Level 5 and 6 students around six themes of their choosing. The artworks had been selected by Dr Forsaith and Tom Dobson for the students. The themes selected by students were:

1. James Smetham and the Natural World
2. From Matron to Matriarch: The women from history
3. James Smetham: Methodist and Artist
4. The Life and Lost Works of Evelyn Dunbar
5. Missionaries and their Involvement in Colonisation
6. Calm and Chaos: Illustrating Climate Change

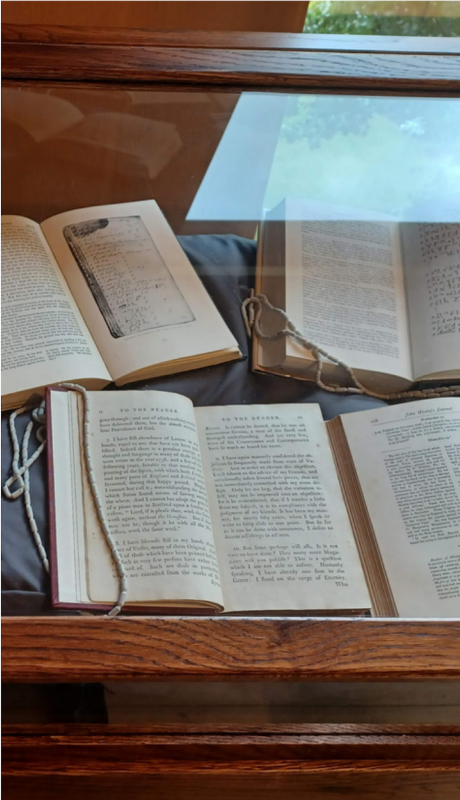
Works selected from the Methodist related collections include 'An Indian Woman' by Agatha Hellier (Methodist Church House collection); 'Seems to have forgotten about me' (a satirical cartoon from the collections of the Wesley Historical Society); Mrs. M. Scott (the Westminster College art collection); 'Thomas Birch Freeman' by David Grice (Methodist Church House collection); and 'The New Room four ways', a photographic composition by Sheona Beaumont (The Centre collection). 'Calm and Chaos' will be recreated to accompany the Westminster Society Reunion in September 2022. An illustrative selection from this exhibition was also recreated in the Art UK 'Curations' tool, and has since been used in an Art UK session as an example of effective use of this tool.





- *The John Wesley Lecture, 24 May 2022*

To accompany the John Wesley Lecture, which was delivered by Dr Tim Underhill on the Wesleys and their use of shorthand. This exhibition was a display of items from the Wesley Historical Society collections, as well as the collection of glass plate negatives created by Nehemiah Curnock (The Curnock Slide Collection, OCMCH).



- *An exhibition to accompany the Ecclesiastical History Colloquium*

Themed this year around 'Art, Religion and Commerce, c1750-c1950', this exhibition included material from the Smetham and Dunbar collections, as well as some relevant books from the Wesley Historical Society Library.

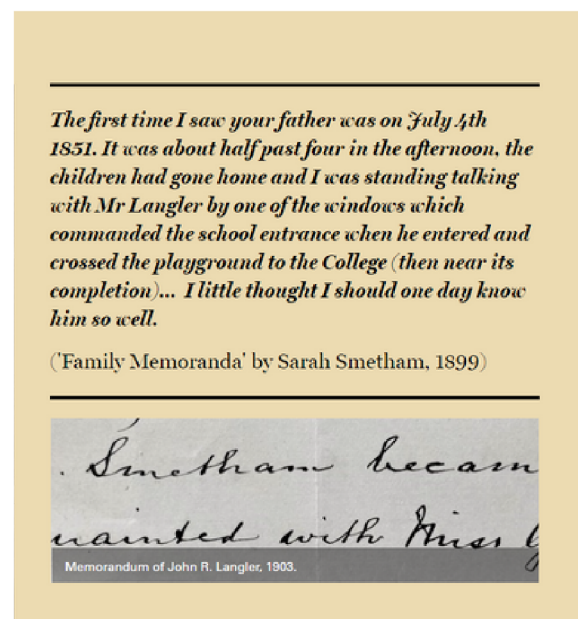


Smetham at 200: A Bicentenary Project



September 2021 marked 200 years since the birth of James Smetham. Smetham was the inaugural Drawing Master at Westminster College, and his wife (Sarah) was one of the first infant teachers at its Practising Schools. The Centre had originally intended to create a travelling exhibition to commemorate this, drawing mainly on its Smetham Collection.

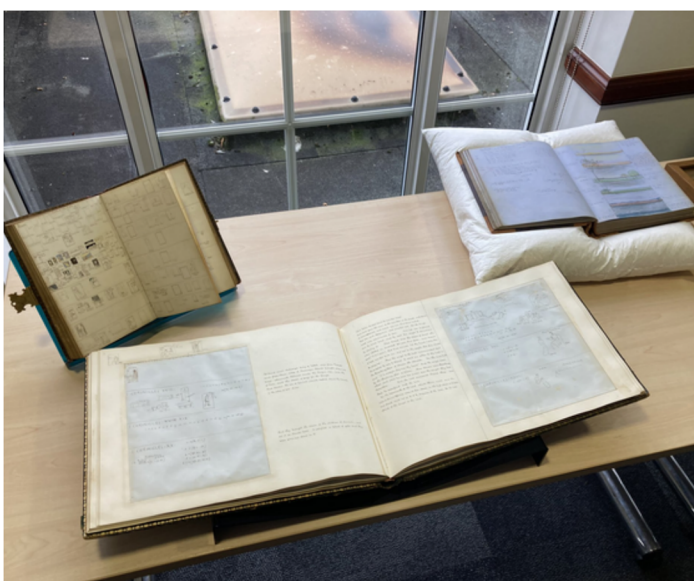
This had been deposited at Westminster College in 1996, and was bequeathed to Oxford Brookes in 2016 through the Capital Tax exemption scheme. The pandemic, and lack of access to the collection, has prevented this from becoming a reality, but has led to several online exhibitions. Dr Reed and Lizzie Barrett (Visiting Research Fellow 2020/21) have created two digital exhibitions around the bicentenary. The first, 'James Smetham Timeline (Part 1)', explores the life of Smetham; whilst the second, 'The Rose of Dawn: an Introduction to James Smetham', provides a more in-depth exploration of James Smetham as a person.



A highlight of this bicentenary project, has been the discussions it has triggered. Sarah Middleton's 'Lifted' course, for example (which she ran with Wesley House, Cambridge during Lent 2021), has led to discussion of the use of art as a reflective tool among those who attended her course. It also positioned James Smetham alongside more famous artists, such as Vincent Van Gogh and Unity Spencer, and used his art (which had often been his method of dealing with stress and mental illness) to discuss these topics more widely. Similarly, Tom Dobson's blogposts for The Methodist Church (first for their festive series in 2020, and then as part of 'My Justice Journey') have led to a wider appreciation of the Smetham family and their work.



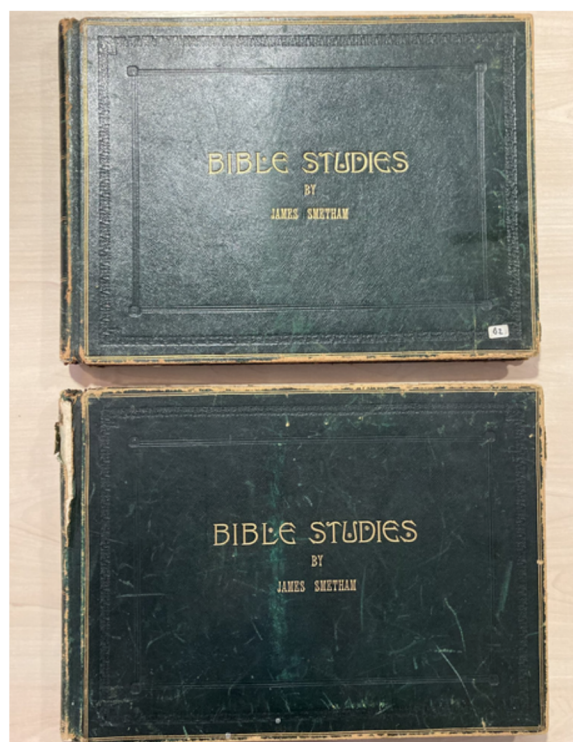
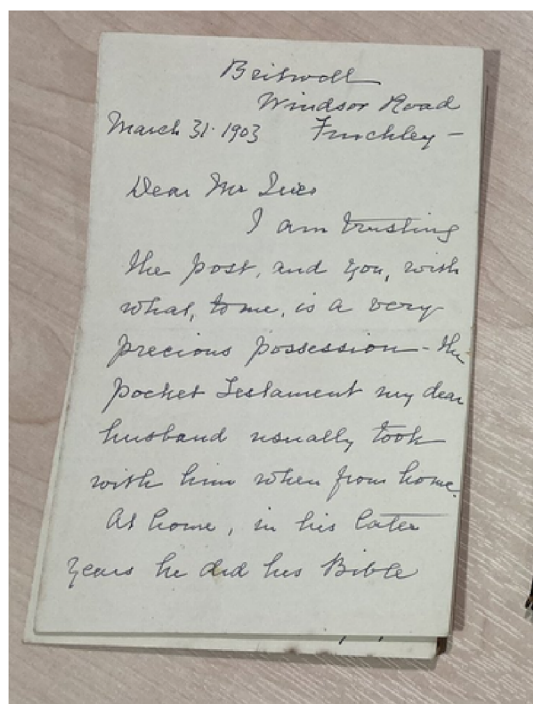
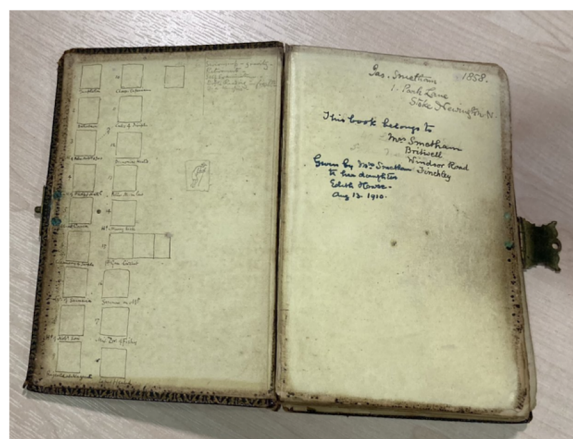
A wider awareness of James Smetham and his work, as well as the Centre's collection, led to his great grandson visiting the Centre in October 2021. Pictured here are four generations of the Smetham family: Rev. James Smetham; his son, James Smetham (the artist); his son, John Smetham; James' great grandson, Martin Peppiatt; and Martin's granddaughter, Annie. During their visit, the Peppiatt family were able to view the entirety of our Smetham collection, and to discuss the work we have been doing.



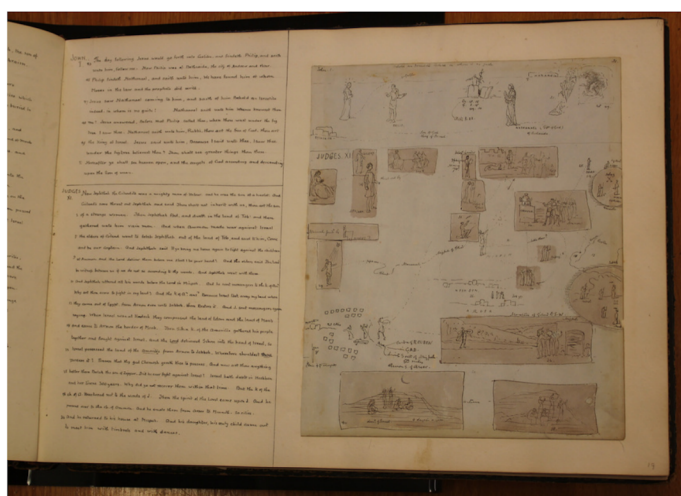
Images: Martin and Annie Peppiatt with portraits of the Smetham family.

The exhibition of Smetham material held by the Centre for the Peppiatt family, October 2021.

Most interestingly of all, however, was the material they brought with them. Texts held within our collection, for example, makes reference to a small copy of The New Testament which had been annotated by James Smetham using "squarings" (his most recognisable artistic output), and the Peppiatt family brought this volume for us to look at.



They also own another volume of James Smetham's "Bible Studies", which was compiled by Sarah Smetham in the early twentieth century. Identical to ours in every way, this volume precedes the squarings found in our volume, and contains further books of The Bible, showing that Smetham proceeded further with his aim of squaring the entire Bible than we had previously thought. The Peppiatt family have since loaned this volume for us to photograph.



Images: Items from The Smetham Collection. The 'Bible Studies' volume owned by Martin Peppiatt with our volume.

Digital Presence

3.1 Wordpress and Cataloguing

Increased work on our collections has been facilitated by expanded cataloguing and listing, which provides greater public access to our holdings. Cataloguing achievements include the complete listing of the archive of Dr Francis Bartels by Dr Forsaith. This listing is now available on the Centre's Wordpress site, and all books in this collection can be found on the main Oxford Brookes Library catalogue (which has recently undergone a slight development, and now lists the repository of all centre material as 'The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History'.) Tom Dobson continues to work on the development of the Westminster College archive, which has recently been facilitated by the additional work of one of our Visiting Research Fellows, Dr Jane Platt. He is also working on the archival material held by the Wesley Historical Society, having expanded their storage space in the past year through the relocation of the Avec archive to D4, thus creating a bloc of twentieth century Methodist archives. Material listed from the WHS archives include the archives of John Bowmer and Geoffrey Milburn, as well as the research papers of Alan Turberfield on John Scott Lidgett.

A recent listing completed by Tom Dobson records all material held by the Centre which predates 1750 - a list which details over 120 items from across the Centre's collections - primarily the holdings of the Wesley Historical Society, supplemented by material from the Centre Collection, and the Westminster College archive. If expanded to cover the lifetime of John Wesley (d.1791), this list would include an estimated 1,000 items.

The Centre's Wordpress site continues to expand and grow as Centre activity diversifies. Dr Reed continues to oversee this, and ensure that it reflects the ongoing activity and work of the Centre. Recent additions or changes include the inclusion of the published catalogue for the Avec archive ((c) Avec Resources Trust); regularly updated blogpost entries; and the addition of the Smetham bicentenary digital exhibitions, which Dr Reed co-curated. In the past academic year, we have added a further nine blogposts, reflecting a wide variety of Centre work and interests. The Centre's website has received 4754 views to our website this year.

3.2 Social Media

Twitter continues to be the Centre's primary tool for social media engagement, which is supplemented with material shared on the Centre's Instagram account and YouTube channel. 2021/22 saw the Centre's Twitter followers surpassing 400 for the first time. Overall, we have generated 278 Tweets; received 25,274 profile views; and generated 83,699 'Impressions'. Our most "popular" month was June 2022, with 12,000 'Impressions' received. Our top Tweet was posted in October 2021, and shared the news of a letter from Hilary Clinton acknowledging her receipt of a copy of *Women, Preachers, Methodists*, published by the Centre. It received 47 'likes' and 6 'retweets'.

Some of the Centre's most popular tweets highlighted updates to our collections; celebrated our research and recent publications; and allowed the Centre to take part in national commemorations, such as LGBT+ History Month in February. Extended social media campaigns included 'Archival Advent' in December; and the Centre's inclusion in The Methodist MyJusticeJourney campaign, during which the Centre was allocated a day to explore stories of justice from among its collections.

We highlighted the work of Methodist women within education; their historic role in national decision-making; and also the possible injustice surrounding an attempted expulsion from Westminster College in the early 1910s. This campaign allowed the Centre to collaborate with other Methodist historic collections in Britain - namely Epworth Old Rectory; Englesea Brook Museum of Primitive Methodism; and The New Room, Bristol - as well as individual Methodists who chose to get involved and share their story.

Top Tweet earned 3,554 impressions

It's not every day that we receive letters from US secretaries of state.

Many thanks [@HillaryClinton](#) for your warm and gracious letter about our recent book.

You'll be very welcome to visit when your diary allows! pic.twitter.com/lrcMlZwiID

Oxford OX2 9AT
United Kingdom

Dear Peter:

Thank you for your good wishes on the occasion of my receipt of an Doctor of Civil Law degree from Oxford; it was a wonderful and memorable occasion.

Thanks, too, for sending me a copy of *Women, Preachers, Methodists*—the title alone covers those of my great interest! Please extend my appreciation to the editor John, Clive, and Linda, and to everyone at the Oxford Centre for Methodist and Church History. I hope to have an occasion to visit someday.

↩ 1 ↻ 6 ❤ 47

Top Tweet earned 786 impressions

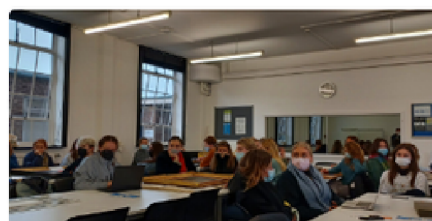
'I decided to ask for an appointment to see the Principal.. to tell him of my concerns about being a homosexual going into teaching. It seems extraordinary to me, now.. But life was different then: gay sex was still illegal'

[@BrookesLGBTQ](#) [#LGBTHM22](#)

wp.me/p7jqhv-vv

↻ 1 ❤ 3

We've had a really enjoyable afternoon with students from [@BrookesArtHist](#) Curatorial Practice module thinking about the challenges and rewards behind looking after art collections, and some of the tasks that go with this, including cataloguing and condition reports. pic.twitter.com/uebdaPbB5T



↩ 1 ❤ 5

3.3 Digitisation

British Methodist Buildings

In the past year, 226 images have been added to the collection, bringing the total to 11,622. These images primarily come from the Brinkley albums, which were transferred to the holdings of the Wesley Historical Society from Epworth Old Rectory in 2019, as well as community donations. To date, 13 contributors have added 477 images.

The collection has been viewed 610,600 times; with 119 images have been "faved", and 71 images have received comments.



1 REGISTER OF TEACHERS. Wesleyan Education Committee.										
NAME.	CLASS or GRADE	PUPIL TEACHER AT	PLACED on the LIST at the date of Appointment	EST. REVENUE	TERMINUS REVENUE	PAID OR LIST RECEIVED	PAID OR LIST RECEIVED	APPOINTMENTS	REPORTS	REMARKS
Bailey	186/	1st & 2nd	186/					1 Longton Road		
Bailey	186/	3rd & 4th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	1st	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	2nd	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	3rd	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	4th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	5th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	6th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	7th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	8th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	9th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	10th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	11th	186/					1 Longton Road		
Coth	186/	12th	186/					1 Longton Road		

OCMCH Digital Collections

Digitisation has continued to be highly productively during this period, and we have engaged the Oxford Duplication Centre to reproduce more items we were unable to digitise ourselves. They have received 407,000 image views, and with the following being some of the additions which have been made to OCMCH Digital Collections:

The Dunbar Collection

Evelyn Dunbar sketchbooks, 1922-1945: 238 images

Hudson Family Collection

Friendship album, 1873-8: 64 images

Family Photographs: 37 images

Southlands College Exercise Books: 234 images

The Smetham Collection

Morchard Bishop transcript: 451 images

Wesley Historical Society collections

Catharina Dawson scrapbook, 1894-1931: 41 images

The Westminster College archive

Wesleyan Education Committee registers: 233 images

Westminster College log books, 1903-14: 421 images



Images: Rev. John Scott (Tinted photograph); the Westminster College Grant of Arms (1956); 'Nocturne' by Eric Jennings, 1996; A screenshot from 'Westminster and Southlands, 1950s' (one of our YouTube videos).

ArtUK

The Centre continues to engage with ArtUK, the national catalogue of artwork in public ownership. The Centre is a Partner of ArtUK, which provides several benefits to us - including the ability to amend our art holdings through this catalogue as necessary. Following another extensive round of photography last summer, the Centre has added more items to this catalogue, increasing our representation on this platform to include 208 works of art, representing the majority of the original works held by the Centre, as well as a number of other artworks held by Oxford Brookes. This profile, therefore, includes works of art such as 'Self Portrait' (James Smetham); 'Westminster College' (John Piper); all nine of the College Principal portraits; the Westminster College Grant of Arms; and the 'Alpha' and 'Omega' panels (Evelyn Dunbar). In addition, ArtUK also ended a three-year sculpture project in 2021. This increase to their overall scope and coverage saw the addition of sculptures to all collections on ArtUK, including six sculptures at Oxford Brookes - four of which are at Harcourt Hill (the two 'Christ and Child' statues; the bust of Sir James Yoxall; and the coade stone bust of Rev. John Wesley). With ArtUK, the Centre now offers the sale of high quality prints of artworks from the Smetham and Bletchley Park College collections (both of which are owned by Oxford Brookes University). The Centre is currently investigating the sale of printed items (such as tote bags and mugs) through this shop, as well as the addition of further works from its holdings.

YouTube

The Centre's YouTube channel continues to grow, now hosting a further five videos; and with 49 subscriptions. Our videos have now amassed 56.6 hours watch time. The following additions have been made to the Centre's YouTube channel:

- Ecclesiastical History Colloquium 2022 3 recording
- Annual John Wesley Lecture 2022, Tim Underhill 1 recording
- Anglican-Methodism Union book launch 1 recording

Public Engagement

4.1 Our Events

The Centre also organised the Annual John Wesley Lecture (in partnership with Lincoln College, Oxford; and Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford), and was delivered by Dr Tim Underhill on 'The needles of the friends': the Wesleys and shorthand.' The Centre also organised the first post-lockdown Ecclesiastical History Colloquium around an overall theme of 'Art, Religion and Commerce'. It included papers by:

- Dr Matthew Craske (Oxford Brookes University):

Another Enlightenment: Painting, Sculpture and the promotion of Christian experience in Georgian England

- Tom Dobson; Dr Reed; Sarah Middleton

The Bicentenary of James Smetham, Pre-Raphaelite

- Peter Vass (Independent Scholar)

Getting out of Whitechapel: Jewish identity and modernism in the lives and art of Mark Gertler and David Bomberg in the early twentieth century

- Sandy Brewer (Independent Scholar)

The Sunday School paintings of Elsie Anna Wood and other women artists 1930-1950. A movement from a "two-eyed stance" to the "beholder's share"

- Jan Cox (Independent Scholar)

Stanley Spencer: Nativity, Crucifixion, Resurrection.

The event was attended by 19 people in-person, and 21 online attendees.

Both of the bi-annual Methodist Studies Seminars were held online this year. The December Seminar was held on 11 December 2021, and was organised by St. John's College, Durham around a theme of 'Methodist Ecclesiology and Mission in Times of Transition'. The May Seminar was hosted by Wesley House, Cambridge on 21 May 2022 around a theme of 'Methodist Theology in a World Parish'.

4.2 University Engagement Activities

In addition to an increase in the amount of work the Centre carries out with students and/or as part of academic modules, the Centre has also engaged in a varied of other public engagement activities. These include introductory tours to our collections for Sarah Hollingdale (The new Methodist Heritage Officer); Ashley Cushman (the new Academic Library Liaison Officer); Dr Abbey Halcli (Interim PVC Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences); Dr. Jan Davison-Fischer (Interim Head of the School of Education); and Professor Lucy Mazdon (new PVC Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences). A visit to the Centre was also made by Helen Cameron, Secretary of the Avec Trust. Further university engagement activities include:

- An introduction to the Sketchbooks of Evelyn Dunbar for members of staff who teach on the History of Art programme, as well as the two Learning Resources staff members who care for Oxford Brookes' Special Collections.

Dobson, Forsaith

- The inclusion of an interactive timeline for Westminster College included in a showcase of PhD research as part of the 'Think Human Festival'.

Dobson

- The postponed inclusion of a session on 'The Science behind Archives' for the Oxford Brookes event 'Beyond the Science Bazaar'. This was originally due to be held in February Half Term, but has now been postponed until October Half Term.

Dobson, Forsaith

- A member of the Oxford Brookes Public Engagement Network.

Reed

- The Orator at an Oxford Brookes Graduation ceremony. This graduation ceremony included the presentation of Susan Howdle's honorary D.Univ. degree.

Gibson

- A member of the Oxford Brookes Multi-Faith Advisory Board.

Dobson

4.3 Stakeholders

4.3.1 The Methodist Church

The Centre's engagement with Church activities continues to grow. Dr Forsaith and Tom Dobson attended the Methodist Artefacts Group meeting at Methodist Church House in December 2021 (where the historic objects stored here were discussed prior to the removal of The Methodist Church from this site), as well as subsequent meetings of this group. Dr Forsaith continues to be a member of the Methodist Heritage Committee, and the Methodist Church Listed Buildings Advisory Group. He has been particularly involved with Listed Buildings projects at Holt (Norfolk) and the New Room, Bristol. Professor Gibson attended the two-day, in-person meeting of the Trustees of Epworth Old Rectory in March 2022.



Centre engagement with Church related activities stems beyond committee meetings, however, with a variety of activities having been supported across the past year. These events include:

- Attending the Pusey House Open Evening, October 2021
Dobson, Forsaith
- An introductory tour of Oxford (and the Centre) for Sarah Hollingdale, the new Methodist Heritage Officer, October 2021
Dobson, Forsaith
- Attending the Service of Remembrance in The Westminster Chapel, November 2021
Dobson, Gibson, Reed
- Visiting 'The New Room, Bristol' (the oldest Methodist premises in the world), November 2021
Dobson, Gibson, Reed
- Delivery of readings as part of the Oxford Brookes Carol Service, December 2021
Dobson, Forsaith



Images: Remembrance wreath laid at the Westminster War Memorial, November 2021.

A Tongan rug discussed at the Methodist Artefacts Group meeting, December 2021.



- Hosting an introductory visit to our archives for Gilly King, the Heritage Advisor at Roehampton University, February 2022

Dobson

- Hosting a visit by members of staff from Regent's Park College, Oxford, March 2022

Dobson, Forsaith, Reed

- Taking part in the 'My Justice Journey' social media activity as part of the Methodist Church 'Walking with Micah' project, May 2022

Dobson

- Writing of 'My Justice Journey: portrait of Sarah Smetham' as part of The Methodist Church 'Walking with Micah' initiative, May 2022

Dobson

- Attending the 150th anniversary reunion of Southlands College, July 2022

Dobson

- Recording a podcast for 'Un-Tied Methodism' with Ashley Boggan Dreff, the General Secretary of the General Commission for Archives and History (GCAH, United Methodist Church), July 2022

Dobson, Forsaith

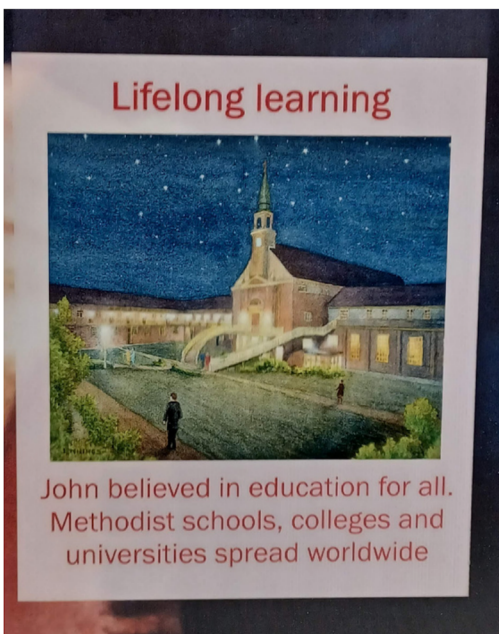
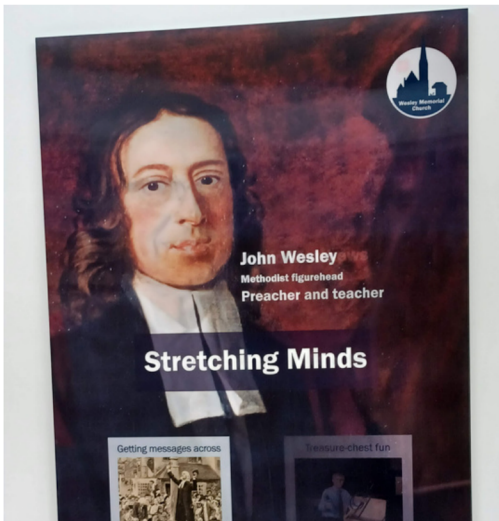


Images: A watercolour of Sarah Smetham created by her husband, James Smetham.

The graphic used at the 150th anniversary celebrations for Southlands College.



In addition, Professor Gibson; Dr Forsaith; and Tom Dobson attended the reopening of Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford following the construction of its new heritage atrium. Opened in March 2022, this atrium features heritage exhibitions, as well as permanent photographic features exploring origins of the Methodist Church in Oxford, as well as how the Methodist Church flourishes in the City today, through a series of 'lenticulars' mounted on the wall. Some of these feature works held by the Centre (or other copies of works held by the Centre), as well as featuring Tom Dobson on two of the panels.



Images: Photographs taken at the reopening of Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford in March 2022.

4.3.2 The Westminster Society



The past academic year has also seen a great deal of engagement with The Westminster Society. The first large event of the academic year, as well as post-lockdown, for the Centre was the long-awaited Westminster Reunion and BA Celebration, which was jointly organised by the Society and the Centre.

The BA Celebrations that took place during the day recognised the award of BA degrees by Oxford Brookes University to 517 Old Westminsterians who had earned the three-year Certificate in Education whilst studying at Westminster College. The Rev Miriam Moul lead her first service as Chaplain in The Westminster Chapel; addresses by Dr Susan Howdle and Dr Roger Dalrymple (now Professor of Education; and interim Associate Dean of Education); and an after-dinner lecture delivered by Rev. Dr. Ralph Waller KBE.



Following the success of last year, The Westminster Society and Oxford Brookes University reopened the scheme to allow further Old Westminsterians to apply for a BA. This scheme closed in April 2022, and a further 80 awards have been made.

At the Society's AGM, its membership formally agreed upon a new constitution for The Society, with Tom Dobson now serving as an ex-officio member of the General Committee of The Westminster Society (as a representative of the Centre).

Outside its relationship with The Society, the Centre was also pleased to publish a blogpost by Derek Gillard, an Old Westminsterian, as part of LGBT+ History Month in February. This blogpost explored what Derek's experience had been as a gay student at Westminster College in the early 1960s.

Images: Photographs taken at The Westminster Society Reunion and BA Celebration, September 2021.

The Westminsterian

Spring 2022



The Society's annual magazine, *The Westminsterian*, was published in February 2022, with two articles produced by Centre staff. Dr Peter Forsaith wrote 'Francis, Igniter of Fires', which looked at Dr. Francis Bartels, whose archive Dr Forsaith has finished cataloguing this past year.

Tom Dobson wrote 'All roads lead to Oxford: the hunt for the perfect second home for Westminster College'. This piece draws on information learned in the process of his PhD research, and highlighted the many different sites considered as a second location for Westminster College - ranging from Hull and Leicester to Headington Hill Hall.

Tom Dobson also provided several images which featured throughout the magazine - either photographs he had taken whilst attending The Westminster Society Reunion; photographs which he had accessioned into the College archive as a reflection of the BA Celebration; or images which already featured in the College archive.

The Westminsterian, as always, was designed by Oxford Brookes University, with postage funded by the University. Spare copies of the magazine were distributed by the Centre.



Dr Forsaith's article features on p.22; and Tom Dobson's features on pp.36-37. An article by Rev. Miriam Moul reflecting on COVID and Chaplaincy at Oxford Brookes features on p.19.

Images taken from 'The Westminsterian', 2022, and a year photograph from Westminster College featuring Francis Bartels.

Research Activity

5.1 Events

The past academic year has been a particularly busy one for Centre staff, featuring the publication of several in-house volumes, as well as external publications; a return to in-person research and events; and several large-scale projects occupying a good deal of Centre time and focus. Of particular note, 2021/22 has seen the celebration of the bicentenary of James Smetham's birth; Dr. Forsaith received research funding from Oxford Brookes for work on Seely and Paget, the architects behind the Harcourt Hill campus; and Professor Gibson delivered three lectures as part of the University of Wales Trinity St. David bicentenary programme. Events attended by Centre staff in 2021/22 were:

- The Oxford Preservation Trust Lecture by Professor William Whyte, September 2021 [Online]
Dobson, Forsaith
- The Oxford Preservation Trust R.I.B.A. Lecture by Nicola Hewes, September 2021 [Online]
Dobson, Forsaith
- The Methodist History Forum, September 2021 [Online]
Reed
- The Templewood Conference' for the Seely and Paget Centenary Group, October 2021
Dobson, Forsaith
- Sermon Studies Conference, October 2021 [Online]
Gibson
- Cardiff Early Modern History Seminar, October 2021
Gibson
- A visit to 41 Cloth Fair, the location of Seely and Paget's offices and home, October 2021
Dobson, Forsaith
- The Beckford Society Annual Lecture, October 2021
Dobson, Forsaith
- Pusey House, Oxford Open Evening, October 2021
Dobson, Forsaith
- University of Westminster Modern History Seminar, November 2021
Gibson
- The Institute of Historical Research Seminar on the Long Eighteenth Century, November 2021
Gibson
- The Institute of Historical Research Religious History Seminar, December 2021
Gibson
- University of Oxford Seminar on Early Modern British History, January 2022
Gibson

- University of Wales Trinity St. David Library Seminar on the 'Bowdler Tract Collection', February 2022
Gibson
- Inaugural Lecture from the Kent Centre for Anglican History and Theology, February 2022
Gibson
- The Oxford Brookes Alumni series with Monawar Hussein (graduate of Westminster College and Oxford Brookes University), March 2022 [Online]
Gibson
- The University of Oxford Heritage Network's Conversation on Heritage Sector Priorities, March 2022 [Online]
Dobson, Forsaith
- Oxford Brookes University's 'Think Human' Festival seminar on "A Tale of whose City? Tackling Growth, Gentrification and Inequality", April 2022
Forsaith
- University of Wales Trinity St. David Library Seminar on Bishop Thomas Burgess, April 2022
Gibson
- Oxford Brookes School of History, Philosophy and Culture Research Day, June 2022
Dobson, Reed
- Art UK 'Market your Collections', June and July 2022 [Online]
Dobson
- Pitt Rivers Museum 'Beyond the Binary' exhibition development consultation, July 2022
Dobson
- Book Launch of the History of Universities volume on Georgian Oxford at All Souls, Oxford, July 2022
Forsaith, Gibson

Centre staff have also attended the following regularly organised events:

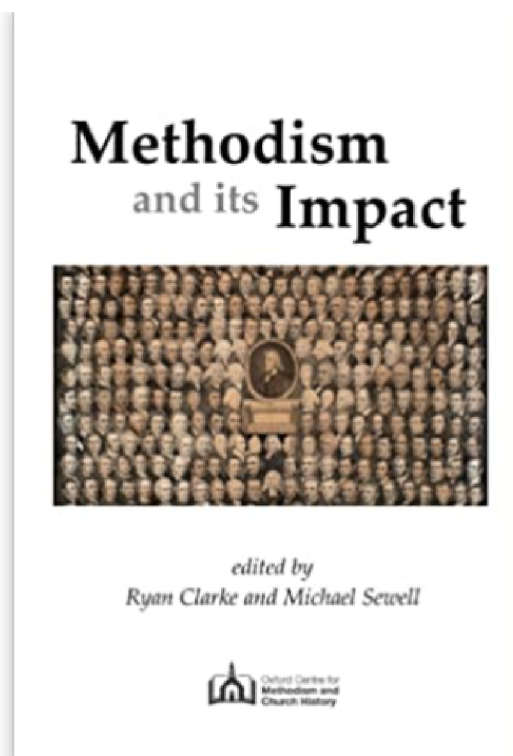
- The University of Oxford Graduate Seminar on the Eighteenth Century
Forsaith, Gibson
- The University of Oxford Celtic Seminar
Gibson
- Oxford Brookes University's History research seminars
Forsaith, Gibson

Centre staff have delivered papers at:

- The Methodist History Forum, September 2021 [Online]
Dobson, Forsaith, Gibson
- Oxford Brookes School of History, Philosophy and Culture Doctoral Training Day, February 2022
Dobson
- The Bicentennial Lecture, University of Wales Trinity St. David*, March 2022
Gibson
- The Methodist Heritage Conference, May 2022 [Online]
Dobson
- 'George IV, Lampeter's Royal Founder'*, University of Wales Trinity St. David, June 2022
Gibson
- 'Wales and the World' Conference, University of Wales Trinity St. David, June 2022
Gibson
- Oxford Brookes School of History, Philosophy and Culture Research Day, June 2022
Forsaith
- '1852, Lampeter's other commemoration: degrees in Wales'*, University of Wales Trinity St. David, July 2022
Gibson

*These items were delivered as part of the bicentennial celebrations of the University of Wales Trinity St. David.

5.2 Publications



The Centre remains committed to the production of scholarly volumes, through its self-publishing venture with Amazon's 'Kindle Direct Publishing'. In the past year, the Centre has published:

- D. Reed, *Methodism and Monasticism* (2021).
- 'The Journal of the Housekeeper of Archbishop Secker, 1744-45' (Reprint, 2022).
- 'The Dean and Chapter of York' (Reprint, 2022).
- R. Clarke and M. Sewell (eds.), *Methodism and its Impact* (2022).
- C.M. Norris, *A History of Methodist Insurance in Britain* (2022).

The production of five new publications this academic year demonstrates an increasing importance from the Centre on the production of publications - especially where these represent important research and/or make it available in an accessible format and at an accessible price, unlike so many other academic texts. *Methodism and its Impact*, for example (which includes papers by Gibson and Dobson), was edited by two PhD students at the University of Essex, providing them with experience in editing a text for publication, as well as providing several of the authors included with experience in writing and editing a paper for inclusion in a published volume.

'A History of Methodist Insurance' was commissioned by The Methodist Insurance Company Ltd. to commemorate 150 years of operation. This book, by Dr. Clive Murray Norris, represents the culmination of their activities, as well as £10,000 of funding from the Company to the Centre, and was accompanied by a visual timeline on their website and YouTube, as well as an in-person exhibition. The book was published on 25 July.

Images: Front covers of 'Methodism and its Impact', and 'A History of Methodist Insurance'.

A History of **Methodist Insurance** in Britain



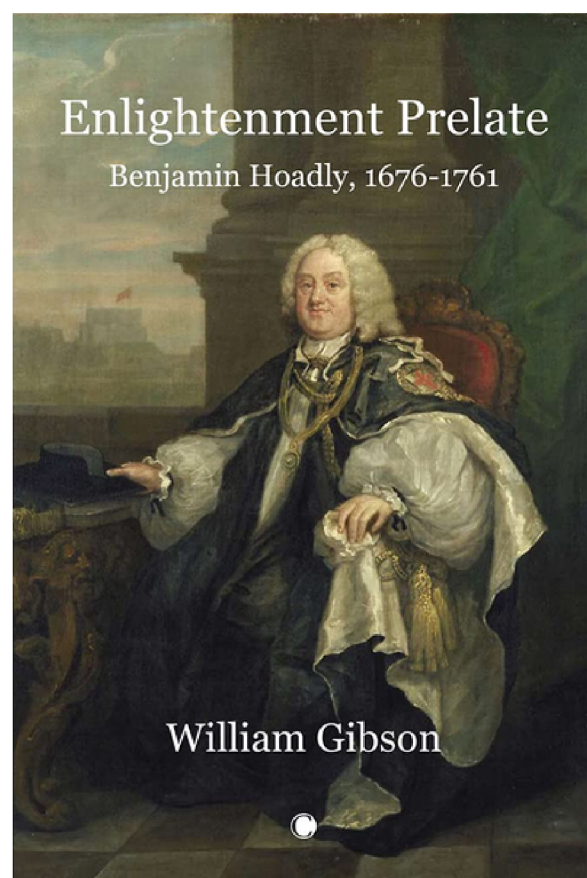
Clive Murray Norris



In addition to its new role as publisher, Centre staff continue to write for inclusion in its volumes, and for publication externally. In the past year, Centre staff have published ten works:

Professor Gibson has published:

- *The Enlightenment Prelate: Benjamin Hoadly 1676-1761*, James Clarke and Co., Cambridge, 2nd Edition, Paperback and E-Book.
- 'Music at the British Court, 1685-1715: the Discord of Politics and Religion' in T. Favier and T. Leconte, (eds), *Musique de la foi, Musique du Pouvoir* (Melanges de l'Ecole francaise de Rome. Italie Mediterranee modernes et contemporaines, 2022).
- 'A Bishop for Virginia in 1672 Revisited' in *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 2021.
- 'Paranormal Politics' in *History Today*, November 2021.
- 'Samuel Wesley and the Religious Societies' in D. Reed (ed.), *Methodism and Monasticism*, Oxford, 2021.
- 'Samuel Wesley and the Cult of Charles I' in R. Clarke and M. Sewell (ed.) *Methodism and its Impact*, Oxford, 2022.

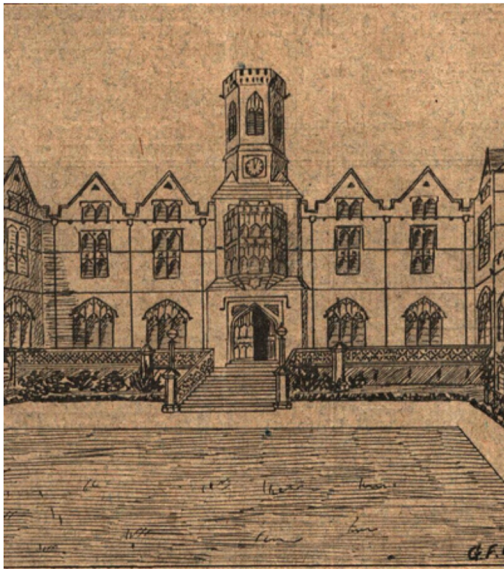


Dr Forsaith has published:

- 'A future for Methodist chapels?' in *Heritage Now*, Autumn 2021
- 'Did William Beckford help to name the GWR?' in *The Great Western Echo*, Vol. 237 (Spring 2022).
- A review of G.C. Newport and Gareth Lloyd (eds.) *The Letters of Charles Wesley*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). This featured in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, Vol. 14/2 (2022), pp. 219-20.



In the wake of declining congregations and challenges faced by re-using historic buildings, Peter Forsaith, research fellow of the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History at Oxford Brookes University, explains the challenges ahead for Methodist chapels.



Thomas Dobson has published:

- 'The First of its Kind: Westminster College and the Methodist Foray into Teacher Training' in R. Clarke and M. Sewell (ed.) *Methodism and its Impact*, Oxford, 2022.

Dr Reed has been completing his book on the Society for the Reformation of Manners in Hull. This will be published as a special edition of the 'Journal of Religious History, Literature and Culture' (eds. W. Gibson and J. Morgan-Guy, University of Wales Press) in autumn 2022.

The Centre's two academic journals were published as usual during this period:

The Journal of Religious History, Literature and Culture

(eds. Professor W. Gibson and Dr J. Morgan-Guy)

Vol. 7, No. 2: Essays by John Morgan-Guy:

- *Two Clerical Dramatists and their forgotten heroines of the Celtic Revival: 'Ravishing' Evelina and Scorned Gwendoline.*
- "Christian Sincerity": *The Reverend Henry Handley Norris and Parochial Ministry.*
- "The Country is on the Move," *the Revds. J.W. Walsh, F.H.W. Schmitz and the S.P.G. Mission to Emigrants from Liverpool.*
- "The Biggest Stink in the World": *Thomas Southwood Smith, Social Conscience and London.*
- *The Search for the Ideal Male: The Art of Hugh Easton.*

Vol. 8, No. 1:

- Lloyd Strickland: *Heavenly Creatures? Visions of Animal Afterlife in Seventeenth-Century England.*
- Brett McInelly: *Reviewing John Wesley and George Whitefield in the Monthly Review and the Critical Review.*
- Richard Sharpe: "The greatest sale of any book ever printed in England, except the Bible": *Robert Nelson's Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England - a neglected devotional classic.*
- Matthew Craske: "He Fixed his Standard on the High Ground": *Valentine Green (1739-1816) as High Church Patriot.*
- David W. Jones: *A struggle for the soul of the Anglican Church in Wales.*

Wesley and Methodist Studies

(eds. Clive M. Norris; Geordan Hammond. Reviews editor: Martin Wellings).

WMS is jointly owned by the Centre and the Manchester Wesley Research Centre.

Vol. 13 No. 2 (2021):

- Kevin M. Watson: *'A strong desire to get into the bands': Small Group Formation in 1740s British Methodism.*
- Mark K. Olson: *Martin Luther's Contribution to John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification.*
- Joy L. Arroyo: *John Wesley's Empowered Regimen: Cultivating Health and Sanctification.*
- Chris E.W. Green: *Breathing Underwater: Re-forming the Wesleyan Theology of Evil.*

Vol. 14, No. 1 (2022):

- Colin Haydon: *John Wesley, Roman Catholicism, and 'No Popery!'*
- Christopher T. Bounds: *Toward a Wesleyan-Holiness Theology of Revival.*
- Claudia Jetter: *Promoting the Methodist Woman Preacher: Phoebe Palmer's Concept of 'Female Prophesying' and the Question of Spiritual Authority.*
- Michael Hirst: *Preferential Places in the Manchester and Stockport Methodist District during the Early Twenty-first Century.*

The Routledge Methodist Studies series, edited by Professor Gibson, published the following books:

- *Anglican-Methodist Ecumenism: The Search for Church Unity, 1920-2020*
Edited by Jane Platt and Martin Wellings
- *The Monastic Footprint in Post-Reformation Movements: The Cloister of the Soul,*
By Kenneth Carveley
- *Henry Foxall's Journals, 1816-1817: Transatlantic Methodism in Transition*
Edited by Jane Donovan

Glen O'Brien's 'Political World of John Wesley' is due out in August 2022.

5.3 Research Spotlight



Seely and Paget

In 2019, the Centre opened the Harcourt Hill campus as part of the 'Oxford Open Doors' weekend. This celebrated both the 60th anniversary of the site, and the architects behind it: Seely and Paget.

In February 2020, Dr Forsaith hosted a meeting at the English Heritage offices in London. This was attended by others interested in Seely and Paget, including members of their families. Although the pandemic halted much work on this project, Oxford Brookes Faculty Research funding allowed Dr Forsaith to resume work on this project, working towards the centenary of the firm in 2026.

The Faculty research grant enabled Dr. Forsaith to visit a number of properties Seely and Paget (or their firm) designed and spend two periods listing and scanning original archive material which will contribute to further awareness and understanding. The first of a series of bi-annual newsletters has been produced, to be followed by a website. A publication aimed at the popular heritage market is planned and also doctoral research. As interest grows in the architectural transition between tradition and modernity, from the 1920s to the 1960s, as well as in the history of social/sexual relationships, Seely and Paget are of increasing interest.

For the Centre, this growing interest carries three key benefits. Firstly, this research is of interest to colleagues in other departments of the University, and is successfully drawing our collections to their attention. It is having a similar effect externally, with English Heritage; Historic England; and The National Trust developing an interest in Seely and Paget. Finally, it is successfully highlighting the architectural designs and creations of Seely and Paget - both internally and externally - as buildings of interest, thus generating interest in the campus.

*Image: John Seely, Lord Mottistone, and Paul Paget getting ready to attend the Coronation in 1953.
(c) The Templewood Estate.*

5.4 Researchers

Academic Visitors

As COVID restrictions have eased, we have been able to re-open our Reading Room to external visitors, something we have been very pleased to be able to do. We have seen several academic researchers visiting to make in-person use of our expertise and collections, including:

- Rev. Dr Martin Wellings (Independent Researcher)
- Dr Clive Norris (Research Fellow)
- Thomas Restall (Research Student at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford)
- Alison Gerber (Research Student at Baylor University, USA)
- Dr Nigel Aston (University of York)
- Dr Matteo Bonifacio (University of Turin)
- Professor Robert Ingram (University of Ohio)
- Professor Guglielmo Sanna (University of Sassari)

Our Visiting Research Fellows for the past year have been:

- Dr Jane Platt who worked on listing papers from the Westminster College archives (primarily the Committee papers of the late 1990s)
- Bishop Wyn Evans who worked on the history of St. David's Cathedral [May 2022]
- Professor Laura Stevens (University of Tulsa) who worked on researching early evangelical and missionary lives and liturgies.

The Centre also now has seven Honorary Research Fellows, who can make use of our collections and online resources to assist in their work and/or research. They are:

- Professor Brian Clack (University of San Diego)
- Rev. Dr Peter Howson
- Rev. Dr Tim Macquiban (Englesea Brook Museum of Primitive Methodism)
- Dr Ruth Paley (Former editor of 'History of Parliament')
- Rev. Dr Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman (Wesley House, Cambridge)
- Jon Purcell (Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives)
- Rev. Robin Roddie (Methodist Historical Society of Ireland)

OCMCH Research Bursary

Following the deposit of the 'Methodist Philatelic Society' archive with the Centre in 2021, a generous donation has enabled the Centre to create a research bursary. Aimed at, but not limited to, students, this bursary aims to support research and engagement with the Centre's collections. This bursary will be awarded twice annually, with the first recipients being Oxford Brookes PhD students, Tom Dobson and Deborah Hartland. A third award will be made to Thomas Restall (a postgraduate at Wycliffe Hall) following the completion of his Masters (2021/22) and entry to a doctoral programme (University of Oxford from 2022).

5.5 Students



In the past academic year, Centre staff have supported activity spanning the entire length of the 'student journey', with activities ranging from hosting a stand at Brookes Applicant Days, to assisting with the delivery of modules and supervision of research students, to attending Brookes Graduation ceremonies.

In February, Tom Dobson and Dr Forsaith attended the Oxford Brookes Applicant Day at Harcourt Hill, supporting colleagues from across the University at this recruitment event - the first held at Harcourt Hill in several years. This event saw students, and their parents, who were interested in studying courses in the Schools of Education, and English and Modern Languages attend taster sessions, as well as being given the opportunity to talk to colleagues from Learning Resources; Finance; and Accommodation.



Professor Gibson and Dr Reed attended the Graduation Ceremony of Dr John Harding in June 2022, John having received his PhD during lockdown.

Professor Gibson and Dr Reed also have a new PhD student. Deborah Hartland started her studying at Oxford Brookes University in 2021, and is researching 'Nurturing faith and identity in the evangelical family, 1760-1830.'

Tom Dobson's PhD research on 'Training to Teach: Westminster College and the Development of British Higher Education in the Twentieth Century' continues to progress, and is supervised by Professor Gibson (Director of Studies) and Professor Bev Clack (Second Supervisor).

Professor Gibson was external examiner for a PhD at the University of Westminster in June 2022 and at the University of Heidelberg in July 2022.

Other engagement with teaching has seen Professor Gibson delivering seminars on the eighteenth century on the University of Oxford MSt/MPhil/DPhil Ecclesiastical History Graduate seminars for the Faculty of Theology of the University of Oxford in February 2022. He has also contributed teaching sessions to the Oxford Brookes undergraduate history module on 'Faith in the West' in March 2022.

Images: Photographs from the Oxford Brookes Applicant Day, February 2022.

Professor Gibson and Dr Reed at John Harding's Graduation.



Dr Forsaith, Tom Dobson and Dr. Reed assisted with the BA History of Art Level 5 and 6 'Curatorial Practice' module. This included the delivery of a seminar on curating and caring for travelling collections; a practical session on caring for works, which culminated in a three-week exhibition of 36 works selected from the Centre's collections.

Students had to create a theme for their exhibition of six works; arrange and hang the works; and write captions for each image, as well as overall exhibition descriptions, ahead of a private viewing for staff. They then presented their exhibition to the rest of the groups. Dr. Forsaith and Tom Dobson assisted the module leaders in the assessment of these. The exhibition has been permanently recreated in a catalogue, and is now being used as an example for alternative forms of assessment at Oxford Brookes. It is intended that a similar course will run again as part of the academic year of 2023-24.



Images: Photographs of Art History students hanging works as part of the 'Curatorial Practice' module.

Appendices

A1: Links

URL

ocmch.wordpress.com

ocmch.wordpress.com/art

ocmch.wordpress.com/archives

ocmch.wordpress.com/digital

www.brookes.ac.uk/library

www.flickr.com/ocmch

www.flickr.com/britishmethodist_buildings

radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar

www.youtube.com/channel/UCplXKBoplZBtsrj02WUSZJw (ocmch brookes)

ArtUK.org (Oxford Brookes University)

<https://artuk.org/shop/featured-collections/oxford-centre-for-methodism-and-church-history.html>

WEBSITE

Overall Wordpress Site

Art Catalogues

Archive Catalogues

Digital Collections

Library Catalogue

Digital Collections
Repository

British Methodist Buildings

RADAR (Brookes' digital
research repository)

YouTube

Art UK

Art UK Shop

A2: Social Media Handles

HANDLE

PLATFORM

@ocmchbrookes

Twitter

ocmch_brookes

Instagram

Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History

Facebook

OCMCH Brookes

YouTube

A3: Collections Listing (WCOT)

Collection	Contents	Locations
The Westminster College collection	Archive; Artworks; Books; Artefacts	GG/02; D4.102; D4.103; Art Store
The collections of the Wesley Historical Society	Archive; Artworks; Books; Artefacts	GG/02; Art Store
The archive of Dr Francis Bartels	Archive; Books	GG/02
Documents on Anglican/ Methodist Union	Archive	D4.103
The archive of the Avec Consultancy	Archive; Books	D4.103
The British archive of The Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies	Archive	D4.103
The archive of The Methodist Philatelic Society	Archive; Artefacts	D4.103
The archive of the Voice of Methodism Association	Archive	D4.103
The archive of Rev. Dr. Donald English	Archive	D4.102
The archive of Rev. William Gowland	Archive	D4.102

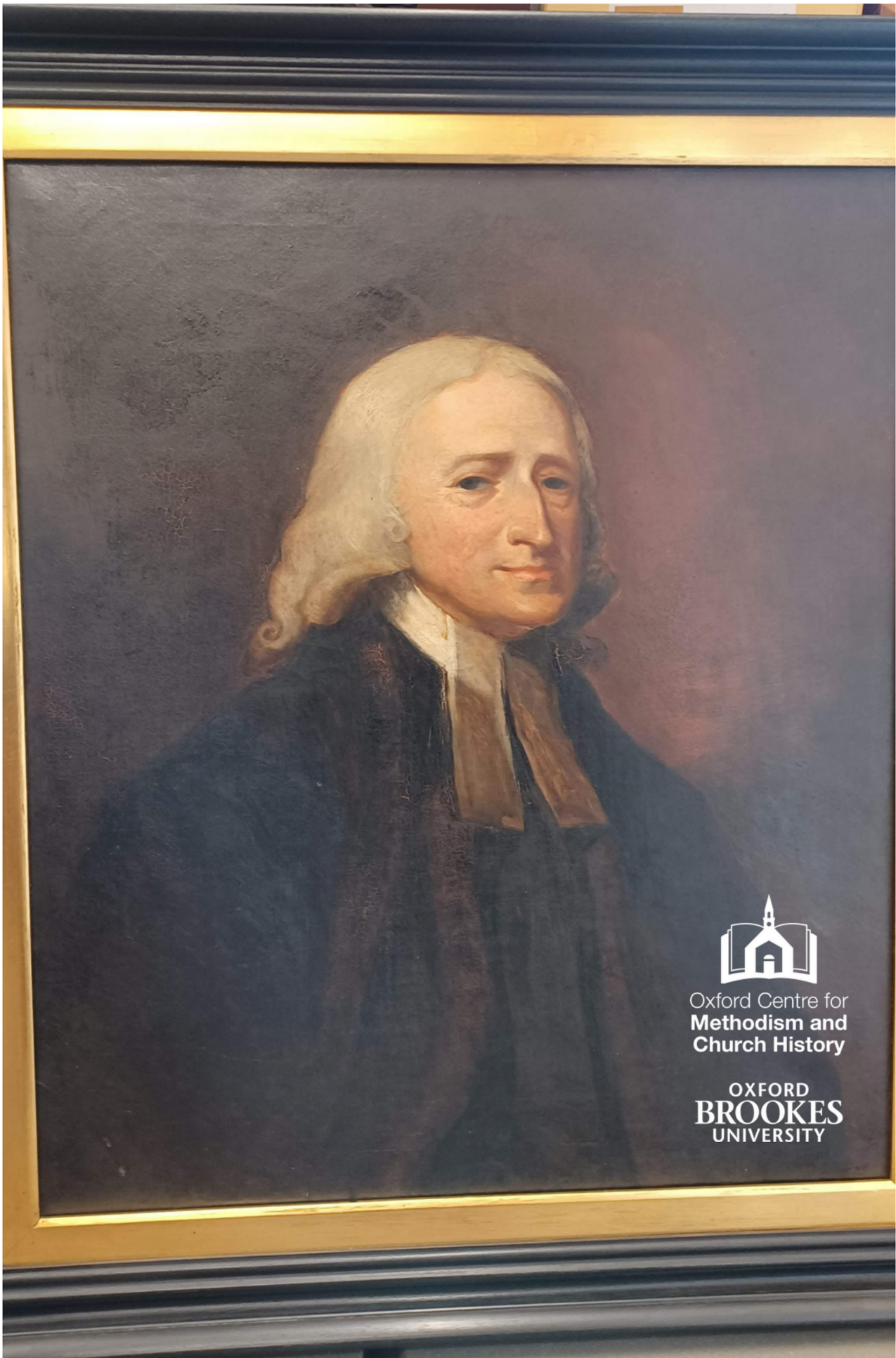
Collection	Contents	Locations
The archive of Rev. Dr. Colin Morris	Archive; Books	D4.102
The archive of Professor W.R. Ward	Archive	D4.102
The Hudson Family Collection	Archive; Books	D4.102
The Martin Greenwood Library **	Books	D4.102
The archive of Albert Mortlock **	Archive; Artefacts	D4.102
The Keith Robbins Bequest **	Books	D4.102
The archive of Lil Thompson **	Archive; Books	D4.102
The archive of Neville Ward **	Archive; Books	D4.102
The Centre Collection	Archive; Books; Artefacts	GG/02; D4.102
The glass slides of Nehemiah Curnock	Artefacts	GG/02
The Methodist Church House Picture Collection	Artworks	Art Store

A4 Collections Listing (OBU)

Collection	Contents	Locations
Bletchley Park/ Lady Spencer-Churchill College	Archive; Artworks; Books; Artefacts	GG/02; D4.103; Art Store
The Smetham Collection ***	Archive; Artworks; Books	GG/02; Art Store
The Dunbar Collection	Artworks; Archive	GG/02

** As newly sorted collections, full details of these will be reported in the Collections Report (2023).

*** The Smetham Collection was previously deposited at Westminster College (1997-2000), and then held at Oxford Brookes University by agreement with the Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd. (2000-2016). Following the death of Bruce Smetham in 2016, the collection was bequeathed to Oxford Brookes University.



Oxford Centre for
**Methodism and
Church History**

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