

Annual Newsletter 2023/24

From The Chair of the Executive Committee

Our social media:



@EngleseaBrookChapel



engleseabrook



@EngleseaBrook

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Learning At Englesea	3
Money News	5
Heritage News	6
Team News	8
New Undertakings	10
Contact Us	10

I am once again delighted to write the introduction to the 2023 Annual Report for Englesea Brook Primitive Methodist Chapel and Museum.

Whilst Englesea Brook is a heritage site offering ways of exploring the past and opportunities for historical research, it is also a place of worship and mission. At the heart of Primitive Methodism was a desire that everyone should know the all-encompassing love of God and that no one should be excluded. These values meant that Primitive Methodism made a priority of social justice, education and the sharing of the gospel by any means possible. These principles still hold true today and can be seen in the pages of this report.

In 2023 the mission of Englesea Brook continues the excellent work of engaging with people locally through schools' visits and Messy Church, quiet days and worship, Friday Forum Theatre, local exhibitions and the development of a peace garden. However, the outreach of the Chapel goes well beyond the local: this year for the first time Headteachers from all the Methodist Primary Schools in the north have engaged with the story of Primitive Methodism. Alongside that, the partnership with the Probation Service has resulted in an Exhibition that is now touring the country. And, of course, the Englesea Brook story is not only shared locally and



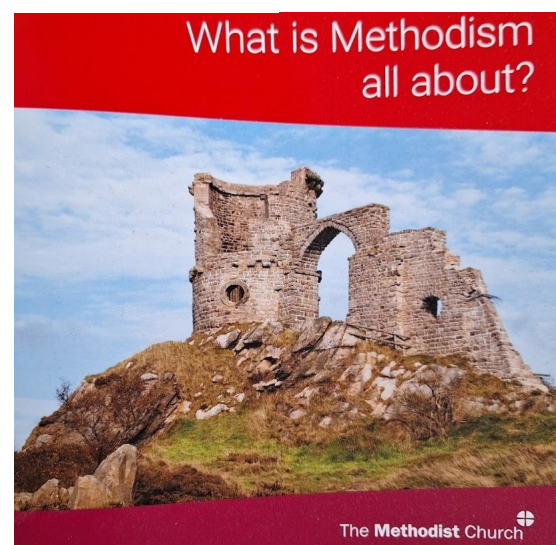
Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum

nationally but also globally as people from around the world engage in our online activities.

All of this is only possible because of the excellent staff team and the dedicated volunteers who support the work of the museum and chapel in a myriad of ways, including enabling the wonderful

Hassall Road Book Emporium. I commend this report to you and hope you enjoy reading this as much as I have.

*Rev Helen Kirk
Chair of the Chester and
Stoke-on-Trent Methodist
District and Chair of the
Executive Committee of
Englesea Brook*



Helpful guide produced by the Connexional Heritage team

From The Director

Welcome to the Annual Report of Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum. 2023 was a busy year for us, with onsite visitor numbers increasing, notably with an increase in the number of organised group visits. We have welcomed groups from local primary schools and local special schools, the US, dementia carers, cubs, Local History groups, WI and Townswomen's Guilds – and that's not an exhaustive list. We have increased the number of school visits on 2022, and significantly surpassed the number of pre-Covid group visits. When you consider the pressures on schools' budgets and the practical challenge of transport to the Museum, it is heartening to see the hard work of our Learning Officer paying off.

Collecting data on visitors throughout the open season is important for the staff to be able to see the trends, and then develop a programme of events to try and attract different audiences to the Chapel and Museum. It is encouraging to note that in 2022, 46% of our onsite visitors were aged

50 or under; in 2023 53% were under 50. That increase is the result of a concerted effort to offer new events such as the Friday Forum Theatres and new family and schools programmes.

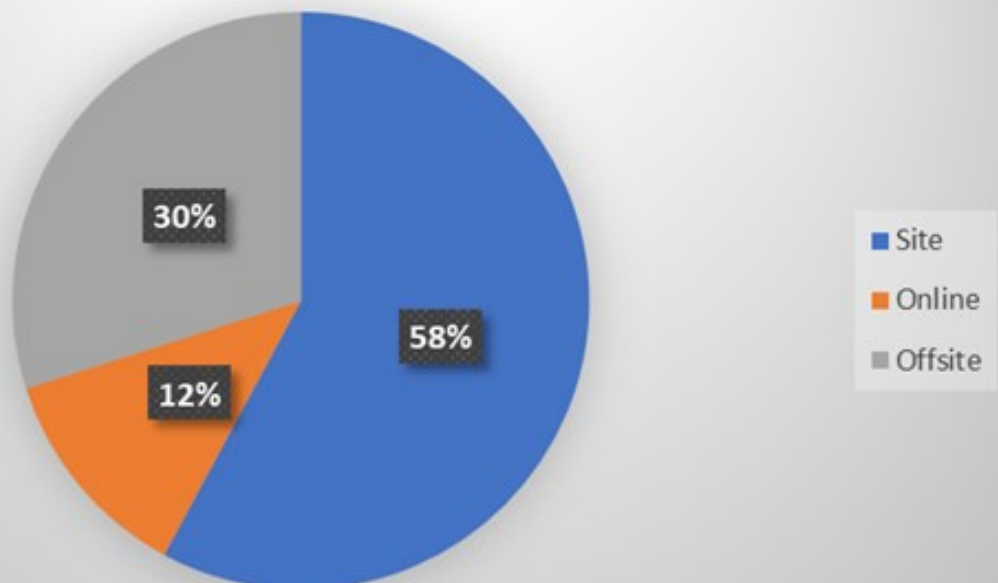
The pie chart below shows the breakdown of visitors who access the work of Englesea Brook in various ways. 'Offsite' visitors refer to those groups the staff meet offsite, giving presentations e.g. to U3A groups or taking assemblies. Our online events continue to be popular, enabling the story of Primitive Methodism to be told on the international stage. 2023 saw visitors attending our online events from Denmark, Italy, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia. Will this change significantly in 2024? We will watch and wait! Finally, 2023 was dominated by working in partnership with the Probation Service, thanks to a chance meeting and £15,000 from the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) *New*

Stories, New Audiences grant scheme. Together with a wonderful team at the Probation Service, we have created a travelling exhibition to tell this 'new story', never told; how the Probation Service grew out of, and is rooted in, Primitive Methodist values, through involvement with the Temperance movement. We are a tiny (some might say niche) museum; the Probation Service is a government agency employing over 21,000 people. I think it fair to say that whilst our organisational practices and structure were light years apart, each of us brought unique insights and experiences to the partnership and the result has been an enormous success. Take a look at the website rootbranchexhibition.co.uk to see if the exhibition is visiting a venue near you. We hope to see you during our childhood-themed year at the museum in 2024.

Ruth Hilton
Director, Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum

“We have welcomed groups from local primary schools and local special schools, the US, dementia carers, cubs, Local History groups, WI and Townswomen’s Guilds ”

TOTAL VISITORS 2023



New Executive Members

There is an unwritten rule in Methodism that may be familiar to some, known as the 6 year rule. This ensures that no-one feels obliged to take on a voluntary role forever(!), yet time enough to really get to grips with a role and bring

ideas and energy to it. Michael Parrott and Brian Barber served the Englesea Brook Executive faithfully for several years and felt it was time to move on (although Michael remains a valuable volunteer at the Chapel and Museum). Chris Brislen, a

former Executive Headteacher from Alsager, and Leanne Lovatt, a Health Service worker from Stoke, have joined the Executive and we welcome the energy and enthusiasm that they will bring.

“the 6 year rule...ensures that no one feels obliged to take a voluntary role forever(!)”

Learning At Englesea Brook

Adelaide Partnership

February 2023 saw the new shoots of a flourishing partnership with Adelaide School, Crewe, a specialist school for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs. A taster programme for Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 ran through March and April, exploring Primitive Methodism, Easter, heritage, the environment, printing, and banner-making. Each session was informal and hands-on and catered for up to 8 students with different learning styles and abilities. The school was delighted with their students' engagement: *Students absolutely loved spending the afternoon exploring the chapel and being creative in the cottage. They left full of smiles and very excited about next week! Thank you!* was one teacher's comment.

In addition, 15 students came in June for Digital Takeover Day, a Kids in Museums initiative, when they made a stop action movie based on The Tale of Old Booty.

We have secured a grant from the Sustainable Improvement Fund (SIF) to develop our partnership. This is being used to create online resources and for our RE programme for years 5 to 9 which begins at the end of January, and work with Adelaide Link (6th Form) which will go towards their ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network, which provides qualifications for students most in need, including SEND) environment qualifications.



Bug House building



A reinterpretation of the Star of Bethlehem.

Alternative Provision

Part of our partnership with Adelaide is to offer our unique environs as an alternative provision more widely. Sandbach School's Lodge Reset and Lodge 11 offer short-term schooling to Year 8-11 pupils who are at risk of exclusion or who are awaiting specialist provision. We held a taster session for 5 pupils in December where we used cake (naturally!), clay and other craft resources to interpret the Bethlehem Star after hearing the Nativity and Magi stories,

and explored the various theories of the star's origin. Three members of staff accompanied the pupils, including the STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) teacher who said that it was the most she had seen them engage in STEM!

Using the SIF fund we have undergone Trauma-Informed Practice training as part of our commitment to provisions such as The Lodge, so that we can offer the best possible quality experience.

We are working to create a programme appropriate for The Lodge for the 2024 Spring term.

Community Peace Garden

We are working closely with Weston Village Primary to create a Community Peace Garden at Englesea Brook, aided by grant funding from the Sustainable Improvement Fund (SIF). So far this project has included: a whole school assembly, a number of workshops with Year 6 pupils and a drama workshop (all delivered by Elizabeth), together with 3 workshops delivered by the Fellowship of Reconciliation to help the children to understand the many facets of peace (not simply an absence of war), how to de-

escalate conflict, and how to find peace for themselves. These themes will be developed through 2024 with the installation of the garden behind the collection store for the use of the entire community. It will be fully accessible, with sensory elements suggested by the children, and will include an art installation created by Weston Village Primary, facilitated by Sue Guildford-Potts, junk modeller and artist. The hope is that the garden will be a place of peace that will be of benefit to the local

community, visitors, staff and volunteers. We aim for its upkeep to be provided by Community Payback (an arm of the Probation Service), locals, and those associated with the school.

“The partnership between Fellowship of Reconciliation and Englesea Brook may have harked back to links made in the early 20th century, but it blossomed because of the skills and passion of the 21st century staff. The hard work of long-term relationship building with the school really paid off. Their easy way of engaging the children meant a challenging topic became easy to explore. We valued working with the museum and hope to continue to find opportunities to find inspiration from history to shape decisions made today”

John Cooper, Director, The Fellowship of Reconciliation

Friday Forum Theatre

We staged three new events over 2023 that proved both popular and enlightening. Elizabeth presented costumed performances that highlighted social justice issues from the 19th and early 20th centuries: workhouses, prisons, war and women. The stories illuminated the issues and prompted audience discussion as light refreshments were enjoyed. This forum for reflection on poverty, crime, and women's place in society - issues still

relevant today - chimed well with Prim history. Although not strictly Forum Theatre, Elizabeth performed *A Christmas Carol* again in 2023, not once but twice: a public evening performance and a special afternoon show for Adelaide School. Both performances gave rise to discussion over refreshments about social justice. Elizabeth is researching Prim archives for suitable stories for the 2024 season; there are always new tales to tell.



Lizzie's Story, May 2023

Take A Pew

Thanks to a SIF grant to improve accessibility throughout the site we have spruced up our loos! New signage clearly points the way to our two toilets and our Victorian Privy (but don't tarry there long as there is something grim lurking in the bucket...) Both toilets are now gender-neutral, freshly painted (artistically) with new hygienic slip-proof flooring. Care has been taken with colours to ensure that those with sight-impairment or dementia can navigate the spaces. The larger accessible toilet now has blue grab rails and supports a baby-change table. We listened to visitors with mobility issues and installed a raised loo seat and door jamb.

New soap dispensers, free sanitary products, pictures and block-stamped quotes from Hugh Bourne add to the comfort and quiriness of our new loos.



No fear of being caught short now!

Messy Church

On August 6th we held our first Messy Church as part of our holiday programme Flying High. Instead of our usual heritage service we had two hours for all ages to

enjoy crafts and activities, a celebration and an afternoon tea. The theme of the event was the story of The Great Family – Abraham and Sarah – and the promise that the Great Family of God will be as numerous as the stars; this seemed appropriate given our heritage and our continuing hope for the impact that Englesea Brook will have, both today and in the future, as a means of mission.

The response was overwhelmingly positive so we will repeat the event this summer, and we hope that this increased community engagement will lead more local families to attend.

Methodist Headteachers

Elizabeth attended the International Methodist Schools Conference in April 2023 and together with the other heritage learning officers presented a number of seminars about our learning offer. It was alarming how little was known about Primitive Methodism.

This was reiterated when we hosted a Methodist Primary Headteachers' quiet day in November. The heads were struck by the PM story and what it could offer their schools.

As a result we are now working together: Elizabeth will be doing outreach sessions to the schools, and they and other teachers are proving an invaluable help in testing out the online resources that are being

developed thanks to the SIF fund.

The Conference highlighted the geographical challenges to schools accessing the PM story, especially as travel costs and curriculum time severely limit their ability to visit us on site. Outreach is the next best thing, but a trip to America may not be within the budget! Online resources may therefore be a valuable addition to our learning canon and will hopefully give access to a global audience.

Feedback from the heads has highlighted that the PM story needs to be told from scratch for all key stages and that its applications will richly complement the Methodist and National Curriculums.



The Methodist Heritage Learning Stand at the International Methodist Schools Conference

Money News

Treasurer's Report

Being the Treasurer of Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum is a privilege and carries with it several responsibilities including that of being a trustee. This has enabled me over the years to see the effects on its finances of the planning for the activities of the Museum, and how the imaginative ideas of the staff team translate into practice.

During the last calendar year, 2023, we closed the Bourne Commemoration Fund with a rededication buffet and the completion of the restoration of the Bourne Memorial, and then turned to the matter of designing a new logo for the Museum. Then a large grant was applied for, and received, from the Association of Independent Museums to research into the Probation Services' archives, and thereby to produce a travelling exhibition of its work, Root and Branch, through early

association with several movements including Primitive Methodism. The exhibition is being shown in various parts of the country. The team of dedicated staff did not stop there. Grants have also been received this year from the Sustainable Improvement Fund for a Peace Garden, from the Heritage Compass Community Grant Programme for environmentally friendly lighting throughout the Museum's premises, and for Audience Development, from Museum Development North West.

All this, of course, keeps me on my toes! Invoices have to be raised and costs paid, and financial records kept in great detail.

The running costs for the Museum tend, with the current financial climate, to rise continually. They are covered mainly by grants from the Connexional Heritage team in London, and from the Chester and

Stoke District of which we are a part. We are always endeavouring to raise further income, and here tribute must be paid to our own Alsager Book Emporium which continues, from the efforts of its volunteers, to raise large sums each year. We also greatly appreciate the donations we receive from organisations, Friends and visitors.

As a result of the care we exercised with the expenditure, and the attractions and displays provided for visitors, groups and schools in the main premises - as well as the displays of artefacts and banners in our Walk-in Store - we managed to end the financial year last August with a surplus of £5,790. A good proportion of that must derive from the friendliness and the home-baked delights of the teashop!

The surplus has been added to our reserves which are

kept principally for the maintenance of the ageing premises, which include the graveyard and its memorials. The chapel is almost 200 years old, and the cottage is of similar age. With the museum display area now over a century old, it will be appreciated that great care has to be taken with the maintenance of these buildings so that the exciting work and life of the Museum can continue to provide interest in Primitive Methodism.

John Percival

Retiring Treasurer

A Treasurer Retires, A Treasurer Begins...

After over 10 years of diligent service to Englesea Brook as both treasurer and librarian, John Percival is stepping down. Many of you know John and his careful, thorough and meticulous approach to both roles. Personally, John has been a huge support and my understanding of things financial has grown through his kindness and patience, never balking at my (sometimes very basic) questions!

The words of the Covenant service come to mind. When in

the introduction of the Covenant prayer, the words *Christ has many services to be donesome are suitable to our natural inclinations, yes, John certainly has been a round peg in a round hole; put me to doing – yes, Englesea Brook certainly did that! But the generosity of spirit in which John has served Englesea Brook has been exemplary, and we owe John a deep debt of gratitude. Thank you, John. So, let me introduce to you our new treasurer, who takes over officially from John on 1st*

February. Anthony Bellis saw the role advertised on the CVS website and got in touch. As a former bank manager who has retrained in bookkeeping we are delighted to have him join the team. Welcome, Anthony.

*Ruth Hilton
Director*



Anthony Bellis

Heritage News

Major New Donation

Manchester's John Rylands Library has held 53 framed items for the Connexion which have now been donated to Englesea Brook. These are predominantly images of male Primitive Methodist figures, many of them principals or

other worthies connected to Hartley-Victoria College in Manchester. A handful are not Primitive Methodist, and whether these will remain at Englesea Brook (and the most appropriate destination for them if they

are not to remain) is to be decided. Luckily a new volunteer with experience of frame and picture conservation has joined the Englesea Brook team. Whilst he assesses the conditions of

the items and their frames, and is cleaning (where possible) the frames and pictures, solutions for the long-term storage of these items are being sought so as to facilitate their safe accession in to the Englesea Brook collection.

Just Women Exhibition

The *Just Women* exhibition opened in 2023 and will continue throughout 2024. After undertaking research to identify the stories of various Primitive Methodist women we conducted an audience survey to pinpoint

which of the women's stories our audience would like to see. We divided the exhibition into three sections, each section exploring the historic narrative of women's place within the

Primitive Methodist Church:

1. Voice of Women
2. Place of Women
3. Acts of Women

We identified four women for each section and emailed brief summaries of

their stories to an audience survey sample. We asked our audience sample to pick the two women from each section whose stories they would most like to see included in the exhibition. A clear selection of women's stories was identified; nevertheless there was a great deal of interest in all of the twelve women included in the survey. We therefore decided to produce a booklet to accompany the exhibition to be sold in the Englesea Brook shop. The need for this was further highlighted when we received a comment about the lack of books about women available in the shop. The book is currently being written and we plan to have it printed and on sale for the start of our 2024 season in April. Epworth Old Rectory will be contacted to explore the possibility of borrowing items from the MWiB Collection to be included in the *Just Women* display in 2024.



Researching Root And Branch

I undertook research for the Root & Branch exhibition, which we curated in partnership with the Probation Service of England and Wales, so as to understand the historical development of the Probation Service and its connections to the Temperance Movement, Primitive Methodism and other Christian denominations, including the Church of England.

I began by conducting secondary research to gain a brief overview of the history and to provide an idea of the archives that I would need to access for primary evidence. I then contacted those archives to arrange research visits.

My first visit was to the National Justice Museum in Nottingham in early March 2023. There I gained access to the Frederic Rainer Foundation Archive, which holds key documents detailing Frederic Rainer's five-shilling donation to the Church of England Temperance Society to begin the Police Court Missions. I then went to London in the second half of March 2023 to visit the



Part of the *Root and Branch* Exhibition

London Metropolitan Archives and Lambeth Palace Library. The former houses the Whitechapel Primitive Methodist Mission archive. At least two Probation Officers worked for the Mission in the 1920s-30s, and in 1939 the Mission opened a

countryside Probation Hostel. I accessed several documents and photographs relating to the Mission's Probation work. I undertook further trips to these three locations to complete the examination of their documents.

I also received digital copies

of archival documents from the White Ribbon Association (WRA), which provided information about the contribution of female Police Court Missionaries.

Amy Wilkinson
Heritage Officer

Working On Our Collection

A new labelling technique has been implemented in keeping with UK museum sector standards. A 'Marking and Labelling' guide specific to the needs of Englesea Brook has been written based on sector standards. Correct museum-quality materials have been purchased including Paraloid adhesives, 2b pencils and acid-free marker pens.

All of our collections care equipment, including the 'Marking and Labelling' guide and the new materials, is now kept on a designated area of shelving in the Collections Store, together with the artefact movement box and our display cubes and stands. A cataloguing guide is in

development that will explain how artefacts are accessioned into the collection and catalogued using MODES Complete and the paper Accession Registers. This will ensure that all new volunteers who wish to undertake collections care work will have clear instructions readily available for them.

A list detailing the contents of the collections care shelves in the Collections Store will be attached to the shelves once everything is in place to make everything quickly accessible.



In Our Collections Store

Team News

Student Placement

We hosted a student from Keele University from January to March 2023. Their primary job was to curate the display connected to the Social Justice information panels in the Museum. Amy, our Heritage Officer, provided the student with guidance about where to access secondary information, both online and in the Stephen Hatcher Library, and taught him how to identify and condition-check relevant artefacts for the display by searching the MODES Complete database of the Englesea Brook collection.

She further provided guidance on the writing of the artefact labels and the presentation of the artefacts in the display cabinet.

The student's secondary activities included helping with a quarterly pest trap check and undertaking an annual audit of a section of the collection. He was also given an introductory workshop on marking and labelling techniques for artefacts.

The student completed his placement successfully.

Keele University later contacted Amy to enquire whether we would like to build on this success by hosting another student in 2024. After a successful application and interview process, a new student is scheduled to undertake a placement at Englesea Brook from January to March 2024.

New Volunteers

Like many other volunteer-dependant organisations, our loyal volunteer base has reduced following the pandemic and the staff have been stretched to cover the opening hours safely. There have even been three occasions throughout the 2023 season when we have not been able to open at all. The tried-and-tested recruitment methods yielded some response, but the staff decided to try something completely different and with the help of the District Digital Enabler, Robin Perry, put together a fun (some might say wacky) recruitment

video, which you can see by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/23pushw9> or scanning the QR code below. The inaugural showing was at September synod, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. As a result, 4 new volunteers have been added to our number. The photo shows one of them, Gordon, bringing his over 35 years of museum experience to the aid of the team. We always welcome new volunteers, so if you have a gift for gardening, baking, welcoming, researching, problem-solving, or toilet cleaning, please contact Ruth at director@engleseabrook.org.uk.



Scan for our recruitment video

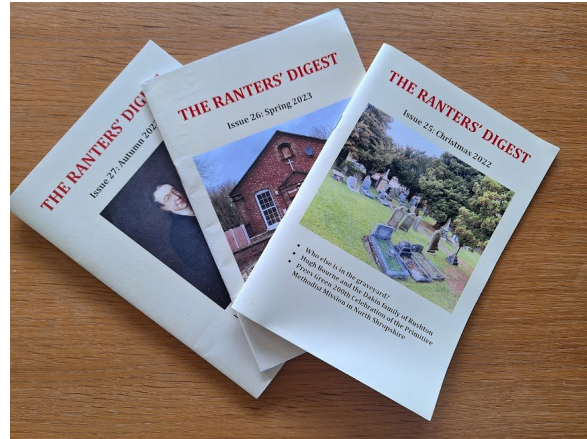


New volunteer Gordon, cleaning and restoring framed items in our storeroom.

Friends Of Englesea Brook

The Friends scheme is for those people who regularly give to the ongoing work of the Chapel and Museum. As part of the 'benefits' for the commitment to this project, each Friend receives a copy of *The Ranters' Digest* twice a year. With the rising costs of postage and printing, the recommended annual contribution has increased to £15, but many Friends choose to give more. Thank you to each and every one for this regular income stream – it makes a big difference knowing we have this steady revenue. Friends can also give us valuable

feedback on various aspects of the Chapel and Museum, as stakeholders in the success of the project – although we are also keen to receive comments and feedback from visitors and volunteers too!



The Ranters' Digest

Alsager Book Emporium

What can be said about the Book Emporium other than to sing its praises! The incredibly dedicated team of volunteers have returned the best year yet for income generated through the sale of books. The volunteers are continually seeking new ways to keep the enormous level of book donations moving! Books are not only sold in the Emporium – still on a donation basis – but also through book auctions, the Ziffit app and, finally, to World of Books to resell or pulp. This year saw the highest amount realised for a book sold - £600.00 for a Folio Society Limited Edition of *Night Thoughts* by Edward Young with illustrations by William Blake - through Malcolm's contacts with second-hand booksellers.



Inside the wonderful Alsager Book Emporium

New Undertakings

Quiet and Away Days

Whilst Heritage for Mission is a focus for the Chapel and Museum that undergirds everything we do, we also remain constantly alert for new opportunities to share the hidden treasures of our Methodist story. For example, this year we

introduced Quiet Days. Themed around Primitive Methodist stories, Quiet Days provide visitors (who book in advance) with the opportunity to reflect, recharge and return refreshed to church, family and work life. Our Quiet Days include unique access to our collection and a

delicious homemade lunch. The Chapel and Museum have also hosted a number of circuit, district and connexional away days. The various groups have used our unique historical setting, input from our staff and the hospitality provided to get away from the hustle and

bustle of church life to be rejuvenated and stimulated. Please do get in touch if you are interested in booking Englesea Brook to reflect on mission inspired by the Prim story.

New Signs and Logo

Those of you who have visited Englesea Brook in 2023 will have noticed that the site has new signage based on the colours of the gallery box pews. Thanks to a grant from the Sustainable Improvement Fund the Victorian privy is better sign-posted, the Physic Garden has had a new lease of life, and hopefully we won't misplace any more workmen!

Our new signs feature our new Englesea Brook logo. Designer Diane Noble, having listened to the thoughts, ideas and feedback of Exec Members, volunteers and staff, not just about colour and images but also, more significantly, about the essence of the story that we tell here at the Chapel and Museum, has created an attractive symbol of both our work and our message. The door represents much of what we are about: it is

recognisable as the door to the chapel, for those who know it, and for those who have never visited, it is evidently an historic door that is open which invites one in and says 'welcome', 'come and see what's inside'. On a

more profound level, it speaks of Jesus' promise that the door will be opened to all, the light above the door suggesting God's light but also enlightenment, learning and knowledge. Its symmetry and informality,

curves and colours we think will look great on our memorabilia – look out for them in the giftshop in 2024.



Contact Us:

Ruth Hilton, Director: director@engleseabrook.org.uk

Elizabeth Morris, Learning Officer: learning@engleseabrook.org.uk

Amy Wilkinson, Heritage Officer: heritage@engleseabrook.org.uk

Stephen Brown, Administrator: admin@engleseabrook.org.uk