



WINTER 2017

ROOF 'N' ROOTS

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society

THE MAKING OF BARRIE

Family aren't far, the local Methodist church is near, and it's a nice walk to Pizza Express. Home is down a quiet lane, tucked away from the city roar.

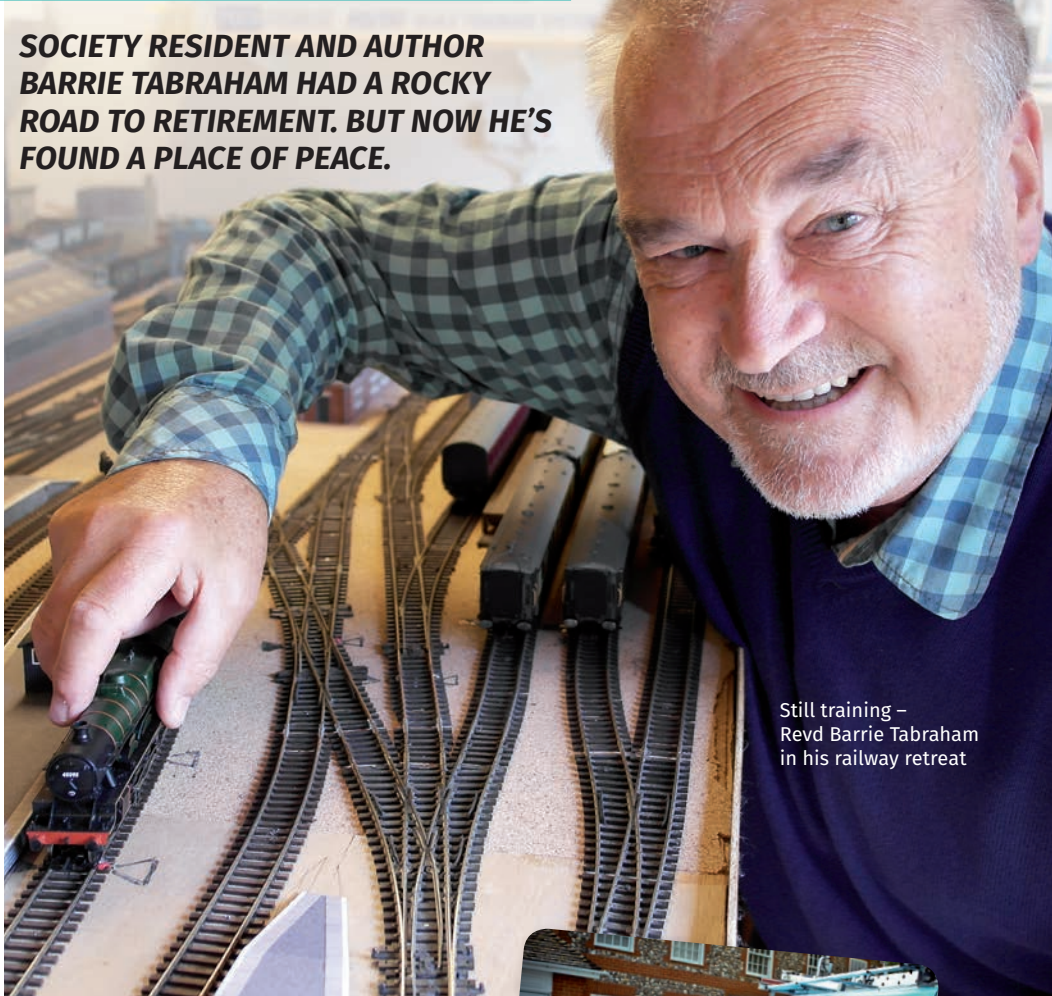
Dragonflies dance on the pond full of ornamental fish in this semi-rural idyll. If you tire of gardening, potter in the shed that houses a model railway.

Is this a dream? No. 'I've never lived anywhere as nice as this,' Barrie told us. 'I can't think of anywhere I'd rather live.'

Revd Barrie Tabraham and wife Joan have been Society residents since June 2010. You may remember his name. He's written two major books – *The Making of Methodism* and *Brother Charles* – the former is one of the most popular resources for those exploring the background of Methodism.

However, it's not been a smooth ride to their retirement home in Surrey. Barrie had taught history for 12 years, then was a Methodist minister for 24. But cancer, two heart attacks and a series of surgical operations took their toll. Barrie ended up being signed off work for eight months in 2004. His district chair said to his wife Joan, 'He should retire, he should stop'. With reluctance

SOCIETY RESIDENT AND AUTHOR BARRIE TABRAHAM HAD A ROCKY ROAD TO RETIREMENT. BUT NOW HE'S FOUND A PLACE OF PEACE.



Still training – Revd Barrie Tabraham in his railway retreat

Photo: Clive Price

RESIDENTS RAVE ABOUT SOCIETY SERVICE

Customer satisfaction for repairs and gas servicing is at an all-time high for the Society.

Recent analysis of Tenants' Satisfaction Questionnaires has shown most residents are delighted with both the standard of gas checks and servicing of gas appliances – along with the general repairs and maintenance of their homes.

Residents now have much more control over the repairs process, which could explain why they're so delighted with the results. In the past, we used to arrange

the works. But now residents can appoint their own choice of contractor to get the job done.

More than 400 said household repairs had been carried out to an 'excellent' standard. More than 120 claimed the contractors' work was 'very good'. Out of nearly 600 questionnaires received, not one resident said that service had been 'poor'.

An overwhelming 73 per cent said servicing by British Gas had been 'excellent'. Another 14 per cent said their

experience was 'very good' and 11 per cent reported that it was 'good'. Only three per cent claimed service was 'satisfactory' – and no one complained of a 'poor' experience.

'Response times are improving since we've been more accurate in our recording,' said Reactive Maintenance Manager Glenn Fry. 'The challenge is to maintain that and improve on it.'



A MESSAGE FROM MAIRI



gratitude for the life of the person who has died and to grieve hopefully with many others. And so it was with the Service of Thanksgiving for Debbie's life, which took place at Shipston Methodist Church on 18th October.

It honoured her beautifully and was a true act of worship from beginning to end. I have many positive memories of the day, and one of them is the surging harmonised singing. Debbie would have loved that!

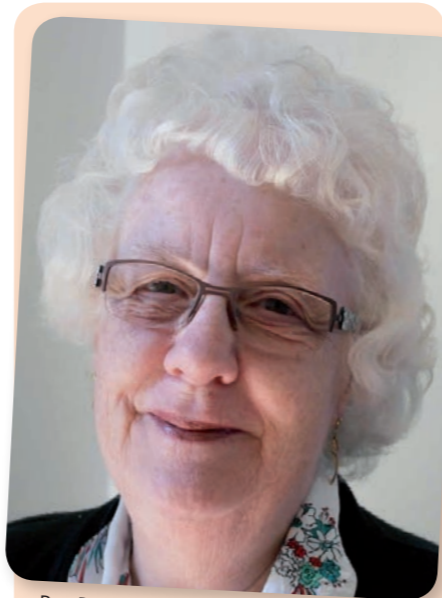
As well as being a colleague and friend to many, Debbie was also a mother, wife, grandmother, daughter and sister. People who were close to Debbie are hurting. We stand with them in our thoughts and prayers.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Roof 'n' Roots* – a particular pleasure to me is reading what our residents have to say, on quite a range of matters.

• **Mairi Johnstone** CEO

The recent death of my colleague, Debbie Faulkner MBE, MMHS's Chair, brought much sadness into the heart of our organisation. We all know that loss is part of life, and grief is our natural response. But, of course, we struggle with both.

A Service of Thanksgiving offers the opportunity to turn to God in



Ros Peedle

Following the unexpected death of MMHS Chair Debbie Faulkner MBE, the Board has appointed Vice Chair Ros Peedle to serve as Chair until February 2018.

Accredited as a local preacher in 1978, Ros has held many roles in the Methodist Church and is currently Circuit Local Preachers' secretary and Lay Pastor of a rural church in Norfolk.

A NEW SERVICE FOR YOUR WELLBEING

Handy hints, practical tips and expert guidance on mobility and independence are offered in our brand new service on wellbeing.

A wide range of subjects are explored in this innovative section on the MMHS website. There you can get access to resources on a wide range of issues concerning mobility and independence. And many of those resources are free:

- a guide on how to choose the right mobility scooter;
- advice from Which? on how to arrange respite care;
- NHS guidance on keeping warm in the winter;
- an online map to find your local community transport provider;

- a free service for wheelchair users;
- a guide on keeping safe and driving for as long as possible.

The 'wellbeing' section is growing all the time, as we are constantly researching and adding useful handouts and weblinks to the list. We are in contact with a range of other agencies who supply us with news on the latest developments in the area of wellbeing.

Keep visiting the MMHS website for wellbeing guidance, regular news, residents' stories and the online versions of *Roof 'n' Roots*. mmhs.org.uk/wellbeing



Photo: Daisy-Baisy

FIRE SAFETY IS HIGH ON OUR AGENDA

Fire safety is high on the list of landlords' concerns since the Grenfell Tower disaster this summer.

Here at the Society we've been running our own investigation to make sure none of our properties is at risk from any cladding material that could cause a rapid spread of fire.

'Most of our properties are houses, not flats,' said Property Services Director Godfried Addo. 'However, we've checked our records and also spoken with landlords of our leasehold flats, and none of those flats has any dangerous cladding.'

MMHS had already been running electrical inspections of all properties for the past two years. Where necessary, we've been upgrading to hard-wired smoke detector and heat alarm systems.

All our properties in Scotland and Wales have been tested, and we're well into the inspections for England, which started last year. 'All the requirements that are to do with fire safety are being addressed,' said Godfried.

'We're fixing smoke detectors as part of that planned programme of electrical testing. MMHS residents can feel assured that all these things are being done for their peace and safety.'

The Grenfell Tower blaze is thought to have spread quickly because of the building's exterior cladding.

THE MAKING OF BARRIE

and relief, Barrie was given permission to retire at 61 in 2008.

'Joan thinks the church saved my life,' said Barrie. 'She said if I stayed in work, I'd be dead by now. I probably put in too many hours. My enthusiasm gets the better of me sometimes.'

Born at Cardiff in 1947, Barrie was brought up in Barry! He became a local preacher, studied history at Swansea University and met Joan, who was working for the Inland Revenue, at their local Methodist church.

They married in 1969 and moved to Banbury, where their two sons John and Paul were born. Barrie taught at the 3,000-strong Banbury School – the largest in Britain. 'I was promoted three times, and loved teaching,' he said. Barrie's father, a local preacher, would say, 'Barrie, you've been born into a good Methodist family'. Others would occasionally ask, 'Have you ever thought of the ministry?'

'Theology belongs to us all, not just the "professionals"'

In his 20s, Barrie found other reasons for not being involved in church life. Teaching was demanding, and he remembers 'overdosing' on sport and spending much time in amateur operatics. But when his father died, that really shook him. 'It made me aware of my own mortality,' Barrie recalled. 'Basically, I grew up.'

Barrie had been applying for other education jobs, but decided to pay attention to 'that little spark' within. He candidated for the Methodist ministry and discovered – much to his surprise – a long ancestral line of Methodist ministers going back to a year after John Wesley's death.

Once ordained in 1984, Barrie took on three churches and two chaplaincies in Merseyside. From 1990-98, Barrie ministered at the 400-member Trinity Methodist Church, Woking, leading an extensive scheme to remodel the



Photos: Clive Price



Semi-rural idyll – Barrie and Joan enjoy their Surrey retirement home

church. His last appointment was as superintendent of the Wimbledon Circuit, and he was based at the Methodist and Anglican 'Christ Church with St Philip', Worcester Park.

He believes the main thing is to 'make God real to people'. As Barrie writes in *The Making Of Methodism*, 'Theology belongs to us all, not just the "professionals"'

WATER HYGIENE TESTS COMPLETE

Water hygiene tests have been completed on 50 properties belonging to the Society.

These have been carried out on our behalf by Midlands-based water treatment specialists Central Chemical Services. Their team of Legionella risk assessors have visited each Society property on their list to run the two-hour test.

Most homes are low risk, which means they don't need testing again for another five years. Just a few properties were seen to be medium to low risk. The assessments were aimed at properties that have conventional boilers with hot water cylinders.

'Some people might think we're going over the top. But here at the Society, we take great care in making sure our

residents can enjoy their homes in comfort and safety,' said Property Services Director Godfried Addo.

'While the risk of catching Legionnaires' disease in an average home is very low, Government guidelines recommend that landlords should make assessments and inform their tenants about general water hygiene matters and offer basic prevention tips.'

Legionnaires' disease is a form of pneumonia. Only 200-400 cases of Legionnaires' disease are reported in the UK each year. There are some simple steps to take, to help block bacteria from breeding in household water:

- if the water in your home isn't used for one week or

more, each tap should be run or flushed on your return;

- if your property is empty for longer periods of time, then the hot and cold taps and shower should be flushed and cleaned;
- shower heads should be flushed out on a regular basis;
- regularly flush any taps which aren't normally used, such as outside toilets and taps;
- keep tap and shower heads free from lime scale where possible, if not flush or use the outlets regularly.



Photo: iudischen



METHODISM IN OUR MADNESS

**ARTS AND CULTURE
BY CLIVE PRICE**

What do *Wuthering Heights* and *The Journal Of John Wesley* have in common? More than we realise, according to literary critics and a recent art exhibition.

Methodism was a powerful influence on *Wuthering Heights* writer Emily Brontë – whose bicentenary is being celebrated next year. Although Emily's father Patrick was an Anglican priest, he leaned towards the Wesleyan strain of his faith and associated with Methodists.

As recently as 2014, an art exhibition at the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth explored the connections between the family and Methodism. *Artists Of Faith* featured ten works by modern British artists from the Methodist Church Collection of Modern Christian Art.

Patrick's ministry was nurtured by John Wesley's friend Thomas Tighe. Patrick's wife Maria came from a devout Methodist family in Cornwall.

Critic G Elsie Harrison argues the 'essence of old Methodism' submerged the Brontë household. Their homeland in the wild West Riding was a Methodist powerbase. Patrick wrote poems which, like Emily's, were 'couched in the meter of Wesleyan hymns'. It is Harrison who reads *Wuthering Heights* with reference to Wesley's journal.

PHOTO: Emily Brontë, published by The Medici Society Ltd, after Patrick Branwell Brontë colotype printed in colours, 1914 (1833) © National Portrait Gallery, London. Image flipped L to R and exposure adjusted.

HOME TRUTHS

**REFLECTION BY
NEIL RICHARDSON**

We never found or made enough time to convert, reform or regenerate the various manse gardens we inherited. One in particular, when we arrived, seemed beyond redemption. Another was so large that it needed a team ministry. So I've always been a bit doubtful about that sentimental Victorian poem with the line – 'You are nearer to God in a garden than anywhere else on earth'.

But what about our homes? A bigger challenge, I think, than our gardens! They are a challenge in this sense: can they, whether we have a garden or not, be a home for God? Is it too presumptuous, cosy or daunting to think of where we live as a home for God?

The Bible seems to be in two minds about God 'living' in buildings. God takes up residence in the Temple but later, it is people – like the church in Corinth – who are his temple. In Luke's gospel, God starts off in the Temple. By the end of the story the Temple has disappeared from view, and Paul is 'in his own rented quarters'.

Homes are always popping up in Mark's Gospel – homes of Peter, Levi, Simon the leper are just three mentioned. It's fascinating to think Jesus may have had his place in Capernaum, even if he left



Revd Dr Neil Richardson is a Society resident and a past President of the Methodist Conference

it later. Think of the house churches in Paul's letters, above Priscilla and Aquila's shop or Gaius' spacious home, it's quite a list. But perhaps we need to turn our theme around. The Bible teaches that God is our home, as in Psalm 90: 'Lord, you have been our dwelling place'. According to a parable of

'God is always more than willing to take up residence in both our hearts and homes'

Jesus, God keeps a welcome at home for us all, however far we have strayed or fallen. As for those well-known words 'In my Father's house are many mansions', almost certainly they don't refer just to heaven – although they certainly do that. They also mean 'There is room in the heart of God for us all'.

God made the first move – came looking for us in the person of his Son. This means God is always more than willing to take up residence in both our hearts and our homes. Such mutual indwelling 'I in you and you in me' – is how Jesus puts it in John's gospel – promises so much: love, joy and peace.

Yet it brings a challenge. If we share our home with another, our relationship with that other is crucial if God is to feel at home there as well. Marriages and friendships need to be kept in good repair. Hospitality also matters. That's a New Testament theme, too. But as our energy levels decline in later years, this should be a hospitality that doesn't become a source of stress. With that proviso, it's still deeply true – a heart and a home open to God mean also a heart and a home open to other people.

EMERGENCY SERVICE

On the odd occasion should you encounter an emergency – such as a leaky roof, flood or boiler breakdown – MMHS has a dedicated out-of-hours service to assist you:

• for gas repairs, phone **British Gas on 0800 107 7798**

• for roof leaks, flooding, locks and other essential repairs, phone **020 7467 5270 or 5271**

and speak to an MMHS representative – do not leave a message. If you cannot speak to an MMHS representative, you can arrange for emergency work to make your property safe up to a maximum value of £250. Further work required should be reported to the Society at the next available opportunity.

