

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

The MMHS office is closed from 4pm on 23rd December to 8.30am on 3rd January, when normal service will resume. For any urgent matters with MMHS properties during the Christmas break, phone **020 3848 6020** and choose the emergency option. Have a wonderful festive season!

roof 'n' roots

The Newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society • Winter 2022

Girl power

SHE'LL BE 102 WHEN MMHS IS 75. HOW BARBARA BRANDOM SURVIVED A MALE-CENTRED CENTURY

David Niven was visiting. But Barbara Brandom wasn't impressed. She was handling the King's signature.

'One of the girls said, "Do you know who's in the corridor? It's David Niven!"' recalled Barbara, who was working in the War Office at the time. 'I wasn't much of a cinema-goer, though I knew the name. But I didn't bother to go out and see him.'

The legendary actor was left lingering outside. Barbara quietly carried on conveying orders for the movement of officers – signed by King George VI and published in *The London Gazette* during World War II.

Now an MMHS resident, Barbara is a sprightly 101. You wouldn't believe she'll be 102 during our 75th anniversary year.

Barbara lives in Somerset. Life started in Essex in 1921. Her family attended a Methodist church, where Barbara joined the choir. She paid for singing lessons from her modest civil service wage.

The first air raid siren went off during Sunday worship in September 1939. 'The organist was in the voluntary fire service,' Barbara remembered. 'He left to go on duty. The minister sent everybody else home.' From her bedroom window she

watched the direction of Hitler's 'flying bombs' – with their buzzing sound and exhaust plume.

Barbara was transferred to the War Office – the first female in her branch of the Military Secretary's Department. Her boss's wife was killed in a bombing raid, and he never returned to work. Barbara became section head.

'The section contained a couple of men,' she remembered. 'One of them got quite cross, because I'd told him off for doing something wrong. He wasn't going to be told off by a young girl. But he did apologise afterwards.'

In 1946, Barbara was sent to Liverpool to deal with payments to bereaved relatives. While there, she led her first service, at Huyton Quarry Methodist Church.

After returning to London, Barbara became a Local Preacher in 1948. One Devon church steward told her, 'We don't like lady preachers here, because we can never hear them'. Barbara ignored him and preached with crystal-clear volume. 'He apologised afterwards,' she smiled.

Barbara worked for two years as Missionary Education Secretary at Mission



MINISTRY PARTNERS: Barbara with late husband Revd Harold Brandom

House – later Methodist Church House – and then as Social Secretary at the Methodist holiday centre Sidholme Hotel. There she met Harold, a former newspaper reporter turned minister. At a concert one evening, Barbara was singing. 'He made up his mind that he wanted to marry the person who sang like that,' she laughed.

'We went out together on my day off,' Barbara recalled. Harold got a posting as probation minister at a church nearby. 'We got engaged in January 1950 and married in July 1950.' Barbara became 'the minister's wife'. But she refers

NEW! Listen to Roof 'n' Roots at www.mmhs.org.uk/podcast

A message from Mairi



'Creativity is intelligence having fun,' said Albert Einstein. I am endlessly delighted at the creativity we find in our ministerial residents, for whom we have the privilege of providing homes. So, too, the broader Methodist family – of which we are part.

Clive, our Communications Manager and Editor of *Roof 'n' Roots*, loves to tell a story or two. He unearths skills and talents and finds them expressed in inventions, hobbies and callings – and even the humdrum of daily living, which we can so easily lift from the ordinary to the extraordinary.

Actually, there's nothing ordinary about human beings – we are made in God's image, after all. I hope you enjoy this edition of *Roof 'n' Roots* as, yet again, we showcase examples of creativity.

If you would like us to feature your creativity in *Roof 'n' Roots*, please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you. You might just be what is needed – another unique source of encouragement to all the people who read this publication. And, in times like these, don't we all need to be inspired?

Wishing you joy and peace at Christmas,

Mairi

Hearing is believing

MMHS GOES MULTI-SENSORY. PLUG INTO OUR PODCAST AND ENJOY!

You can listen to, as well as read, *Roof 'n' Roots* – thanks to a new series of podcasts launched this year.

Presented by George Luke – an award-winning radio producer who's created programmes for Radio 4, Premier Radio and Chiltern Voice – the podcasts give *Roof 'n' Roots* the audio treatment.

A journalist who's also worked for the

WHAT YOU CAN DO

FREE PODCAST MUG! We have 100 in a Christmas giveaway for MMHS residents! Email comms@mmhs.org.uk with your name and address, or send your details in a note to: Clive Price, Communications Manager, Methodist Ministers' Housing Society, 109 Baker Street, London W1U 6RP. It's first come, first served.

Listen to the podcasts by visiting <https://mmhs.org.uk/podcast>

Methodist Church, George helped Dr Leroy Logan MBE write his autobiography *Closing Ranks: My Life As A Cop* – which became part of the *Small Axe* anthology film series by British director Steve McQueen.

George has interviewed a whole range of people from politicians to pop stars, authors to activists, and has contributed to several books including – *The Rough Guide To World Music* and *The Rough Guide To Rock*.

MEDIA FEAST: A copy of the new MMHS Media Card should be with your *Roof 'n' Roots*. It offers a quick visual menu of podcast, print and video resources for your information and inspiration!



The three MMHS podcasts George has produced for us so far are already available on the MMHS website, and a fourth is underway. Existing programmes feature such content as:

- advice on staying safe online, the joy of gardening, our 75th anniversary, heavy metal church;
- looking back on six years of *Roof 'n' Roots* and how MMHS has returned to the Methodist Conference after the pandemic;
- tidy your garden and gutters, keeping



AWARD WINNER: Our audio maestro George Luke delivers the MMHS podcast to you!

warm in winter and how not to hang up on your mobile phone.

Most of all, the podcasts feature clips from interviews with MMHS residents, who share how they have made their home with us.

'The podcast does what *Roof 'n' Roots* does, but in a radio format,' said George, 'so you can sit down with a cup of tea and have a listen. There's practical advice, but more importantly, stories of residents who've lived eventful and interesting lives.'

'As I grow older, and have lost quite a few friends and family, I feel more and more the urgency of the need to record and tell those amazing stories that people have hidden away. That's a motivation behind the programmes I make. These are stories worth preserving.'

THERE IS NO ROOM

There is room for you in the Christmas story. That's the message from the Methodist Church's festive campaign – and we're taking part.

We have contributed a specially made video for *There Is Room* – that shows eight of our residents who've found room with MMHS.

Filming is by Communications Manager Clive Price and by videographer Peter Wooding. Peter produced the whole video.

The campaign *There Is Room* presents the Methodist Church as a welcoming and inclusive place for all.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Our film will be on the Methodist Church website from 18 to 23 December as part of their Christmas campaign resources. You'll be able to see it here – www.methodist.org.uk/thereisroom.

◀ Girl power

to it as 'our ministry'. She played an equal role and saw their marriage as a partnership.

Harold developed a knack of merging churches, sometimes across denominational boundaries. 'He was one of the best "knitters" in Methodism, as far as knitting churches together was concerned,' Barbara smiled.

On retirement, the couple moved into their MMHS home in 1985. Harold died of a heart attack at age 80 in 2000. 'We were very happy here,' Barbara said. 'As far as the Housing Society are concerned, they've always been very helpful if I'd needed anything.'

After speaking at more than 200 venues – from village chapels to central halls – she has now completed her preaching career. But Barbara still keeps busy with four children, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? It's...Sheila!

IN THE RUN-UP TO OUR 75TH ANNIVERSARY, OUR BUILDING INSURERS CELEBRATE 150 YEARS. MEET ANOTHER METHODIST INSURANCE CLIENT RISING TO THE OCCASION...

Methodist Insurance client Sheila Hallas raised the bar for celebrations when she marked the 50th anniversary of her charity pop-up shops.

Since Covid cut the revenue of Sheila's Combined Charities Christmas Shops, she decided to do something drastic. At age 89, this Wilmslow woman went wing-walking. Sheila clambered onto the top wing of a vintage biplane at Cotswold AeroSuperBatics, put on her goggles, and strapped herself on, as her family watched.

'I had the most amazing, bird's-eye view of the Cotswolds,' she told Methodist

Insurance, 'it was utterly spectacular.' Sheila raised a soaring £5,000 for her own roster of charities. Methodist Insurance shared her story during their 150th anniversary.

We thought we were doing well at MMHS to mark 75 years. Methodist Insurance – who supply our buildings cover – have been around double that time, and, like their customer Sheila, have been celebrating with some top-flight events.

These include a flower wall – with '150' picked out in red blooms – at a special Service of Thanksgiving at Methodist Central Hall, Manchester. 'The event was a fantastic way for us to mark this significant milestone in the life of the oldest church insurance company in the UK,' said Methodist Insurance Chair Paul Davis. The company also gave away 15 awards of £1,500 – one for every decade

since their foundation – to church and community ventures. Award winners include – a Lego café in Cornwall to unite families, a mobile 'bacon butty' service to support Herefordshire farmers, and a



A WING AND A PRAYER: Sheila soars to new heights of giving

Welsh church using art to bring isolated people together.

Methodist Insurance have been celebrating at other sponsored events, such as the Superintendents Conferences in Oxford and Blackpool, the Irish Conference in Belfast, Conference UK and the Church's 3Generate Children and Youth Assembly in Birmingham.

It was in 1872 that a small group of Methodists met to protect their churches and support their community, forming the genesis of what became Methodist Insurance. Since then, they've served the Methodist community through six monarchs, two world wars, and countless ups and downs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Find out more about 150 years of Methodist Insurance by visiting www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

As the nights draw in, do some drawing!

FESTIVE REFLECTION FROM CLAIRE VESSEY

Art isn't just a cosy thing to do. It can help unlock doors to a calmer mind and bring you into the moment. It takes you to a place of peace in unsettled times.

Research published by University College London's mental health network shows that engaging with the visual arts can reduce anxiety. A study on Science Direct shows that participatory art-based activities enhance patients' wellbeing and quality of life.

As the days get shorter and the weather turns colder, let's bring light and warmth to our journey through the season – with just a little bit of imagination.

Get yourself some paper – anything lying around – old cards, printer paper, even the back of spare wallpaper will do. Collect your drawing tools, pencils, ink pens, crayons, coloured pencils, paint and paint brushes if you have them – even a biro if that's what you have to hand. Grab yourself a big mug of your favourite hot drink and settle down to create.

Simple, outlined shapes are easy if you are new to this. But you can draw anything you like, if you're a more advanced artist. Start with a star – remember the ones you drew as a child made up of two intersecting triangles?

Or you can begin with a Christmas tree with three triangles one on top of the other, starting with a big one then a



CHRISTMAS CONTEMPLATION: Claire Vessey suggests some seasonal art

smaller one and then a smaller one again, perhaps a star on top. If you fancy drawing a robin, the body is a semi-circle and the wing a semi-circle, a triangle for the tail, a pair of legs and a curved line for the redbreast.

When you have your initial outline – make it quite bold – fill in the shape with patterns. Zig zags and circles, squiggles and crescents – choose any shape or pattern you like. Doodle away till you've filled the shape.

Then the good part – you get to colour it in. Colouring is good for the mind too, so go to town with it. Choose traditional festive colours of green and red and white, or gold. You could go with cool blues or warm oranges and yellows, vibrant rainbow colours or striking black and white.

If you want to challenge yourself, why not do a beautiful line of Christmas trees and a starry sky? They can be as decorative and detailed as you like. There's no right or wrong. This time and this space is for you. It doesn't need to be a masterpiece. There is no pressure. Just have fun, take a moment for yourself. 🍷

Claire Vessey is an artist who grew up in the Methodist Church, and has played saxophone in worship bands – <https://www.clairevesseyart.co.uk>



FESTIVE FUN: Simple and creative relaxation at Christmas

The road to No 75

We mark our 75th anniversary next year! We'd be delighted if you could join us on this journey.

Are you, your family or your church also celebrating an anniversary in 2023? If so, please share it with us. We can make your moment part of our festivities.

We hope to use such stories on our website, in our newsletter *Roof 'n' Roots*, and on our exhibition stand at the Methodist Conference.

Let's make a fuss of us! Share your anniversary story with us by emailing comms@mmhs.org.uk



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