



Visit the MMHS stand (no 19) at the 2024 Methodist Conference in the Royal Armouries and New Dock Hall, Leeds. See you there!

THE BEST OF

Roof 'n' Roots

VOLUME TWO

Special edition of the newsletter of the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society

Thanks for joining our journey!

Thank you for joining us on the road to our 75th anniversary – and beyond. It has been quite a journey.

This special edition of *Roof 'n' Roots* marks the completion of that celebration. We present a compilation of residents' stories from past editions.

One of the milestones of our anniversary has been the release of MMHS's first ever single – our celebration hymn *Christ Is The Cornerstone* by singer-songwriter Paul Field.

In a special interview for MMHS – which can be seen in video on our website – Paul shared the story behind the song and how he wrote it for our celebration year.

Since the song was released, Paul has been encouraging people in church music groups to play it. 'As it's out there with the music, obviously people



HYMN FOR US: Singer-songwriter Paul Field wrote the celebration song for our 75th anniversary

will always make the song their own,' said Paul. 'They'll play it at different speeds, different tempos – that's all fine with me,' he added.

'I'm very happy to have done it,' Paul said of the composition. Thanks, Paul – and congratulations on recently celebrating your own 70th birthday and the 50th anniversary since releasing your first album!

You can still download the track and sheet music from the MMHS website. *Christ Is The Cornerstone* is also available on audio streaming services – and on CD from MMHS.

Many people at last year's Methodist Conference heard the song and took copies of the CD home with them. We have a few copies left, so let us know if you'd like one.

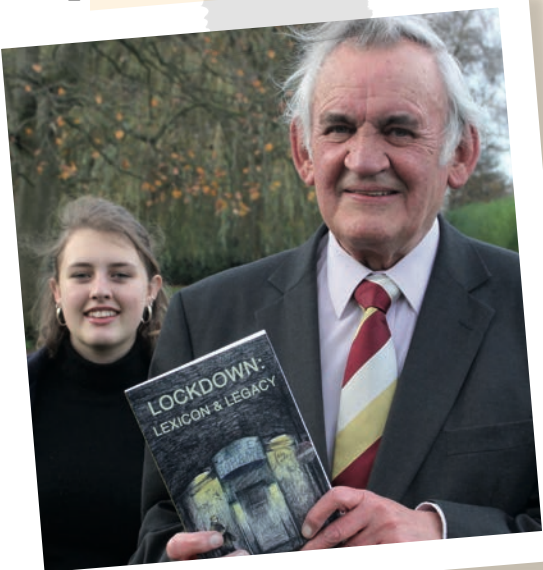
Enjoy the stories! And here's to the future... 🌱



SUPER SPREADS: Various outlets offered generous coverage for our 75th celebrations

Read all about us – mmhs.org.uk/guest

How people pushed through the pandemic



FAMILY VENTURE: MMHS resident Bob Davies wrote a record of the pandemic, and granddaughter Emily created the cover

Making masks from knicker elastic, telling Groucho Marx jokes, sharing 'worship workout' YouTube clips, cooking Bali-style on Zoom, trampolining for charity and recording a song a day are among the ways people coped with Covid.

Such pandemic pastimes were revealed in an A-Z called *Lockdown: Lexicon & Legacy*. More than 400

copies were sold by publisher Revd Robert Davies, an MMHS resident.

Bob had already written an A-Z of football as fanzine articles for his favourite club Wrexham. 'I always thought I'd love to do an A-Z of something else,' he said. 'I got this inspiration – why not about lockdown?'

He knew many people with stories. 'It came together in a haphazard way,' Bob confessed. 'I didn't make a list. I kept thinking of people – and pestering them with emails!'

Some folk wrote prayers, others stories – such as church bells silenced for the first time since World War II. There were ripping yarns like a father creating 'cuddlesticks' with gloves mounted on long poles. There was a simple gift of flowers for a couple who felt alone.

Bob's granddaughter Emily created the cover, son Peter wrote the foreword, son Martin and grandson Leo both contributed to the book. Although Bob saw it as an A-Z of lockdown, a friend told him he had made a document of our time. 📖

'He taught me how to rock and roll'

You might not see his name in lights. But MMHS resident Revd Trevor Haigh has played his own modest part at the forefront of cultural change.

Like The Beatles' John Lennon, Mick Jagger of The Rolling Stones, and The Who's Roger Daltrey, Trevor was part of a skiffle group in the 50s.

Called The Sapphires, they played a regular Saturday night spot at a local venue and won a skiffle championship in Yorkshire. 'We were number one in our street,' Trevor smiled.

Skiffle emerged from early 50s jazz clubs as a British expression of American folk and blues. It gave young people their own exciting sound, amid the dull dreary days of rationing. 'It's folk music, played with a jazz beat,' said Trevor, 82 at the time of our interview.

The Sapphires were among 30,000-50,000 active skiffle groups at the time. It was a grassroots explosion, spawning classic 60s rock bands. The most recent DIY youth movement with a similar three-chord thrash was 70s punk.

Trevor played guitar. His three other bandmates played guitar, tea-chest bass and washboard. 'We all went to the same



MUSICAL MATES: Jenny and Trevor Haigh celebrated their Diamond Wedding during our anniversary year

youth club. We were only 16, 17 year-old, if that,' Trevor remembered from his skiffle days.

Even more life-changing was when Trevor rolled up on his James motorbike to impress young Jenny. A Cliff Richard fan, Jenny knew nothing of skiffle, but her heart skipped to a new rhythm – particularly when Trevor took her dancing. 'He taught me how to rock and roll,' smiled Jenny, now 78.

The couple married on Boxing Day 1963. They celebrated their Diamond Wedding during MMHS's 75th anniversary year. 📅

'Treasure island' prepared Gwenda for mission

Childhood on a remote Welsh island prepared MMHS resident Gwenda Watson for a future life of mission.

She went from living in one of Britain's smallest island communities – to helping husband Victor run one of the country's biggest Methodist churches, Walworth Methodist Church, London, also known as Clubland.

Born in 1930 at the Welsh village of Cwm-y-Glo, 'valley of coal', Gwenda contracted polio at just three months. If that wasn't enough of a challenge, her mother became headmistress of the only school on Ynys Enlli, the 'Island in the Currents', better known as Bardsey.

They moved to this legendary 'Island of 20,000 Saints' situated two miles off the Llŷn Peninsula. While the name sounds magical, Bardsey was without running water, gas or electricity.

'There were ten houses, a chapel, a school and a lighthouse,' Gwenda smiled. She remembers it as a special

childhood, but wonders how her mother coped, especially when her father died of tuberculosis.

Lighting was by paraffin lamps. Water came from wells. Driftwood was gathered for the fire. 'But we all had enough,' Gwenda remembered. She now realises that taxing existence prepared her for mission and church work. 🏠



ISLAND GIRL: Gwenda Watson was brought up on the mystical isle of Bardsey, without any modern amenities – but plenty of ancient wonder

Standing on the rock in shifting times

Revsd Barrie and James Morley are Dad and lad. They're also Methodist ministers who work out their calling in different ways.

An MMHS resident since 2011, Barrie used to work for the National Coal Board. It turned out to be ideal training for serving a coal mining community as their Methodist minister.

Son James used to borrow dad's Buddy Holly tape to play on his first ever Walkman. It turned out to be ideal training for serving rock music fans as pastor in the pandemic.

'During the first big lockdown, I thought, what would a "heavy metal" compline look like?' said James, who leads three churches in Yorkshire. He decided to find out.

He launched a service on Facebook and

YouTube – mixing liturgy with heavy metal – a type of music characterised by distorted guitars and vigorous vocals.

'We were reaching out to people in the metal scene and Christians within it,' James explained. 'For some people, it became "church" during the pandemic.'

Between music tracks, worshippers would pray about personal crises. 'People would share about a bereavement or miscarriage,' said James. 'Real life pastoral care would come out of it.'

So what did dad think of his son's more recent 'Metal Compline'? 'It did draw folk,' said Barrie, 'particularly when there was no physical being together. It was very important.' 🎸

DAD AND LAD: The MMHS video with Barrie and son James earned us coverage in the *Methodist Recorder*, and warm feedback on YouTube



Puppy love

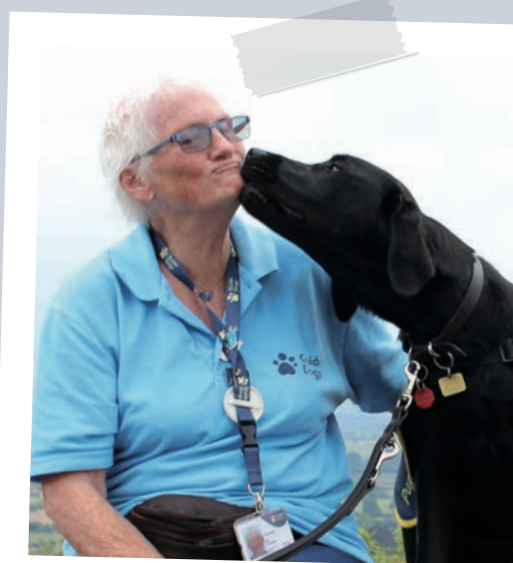
When we asked residents to share their anniversary stories as part of MMHS's 75th celebrations, Iris Chapple was among the first to take the lead. She gave us real 'paws' for thought.

Iris was celebrating her 40th anniversary of being a 'Puppy Raiser' for Guide Dogs, just as MMHS was celebrating its 75th birthday. She had cared for 27 puppies who go on to help people who have sight loss.

To bolster such dogged determination, Iris had also done some daring fund-raising activities for the charity such as parachuting and abseiling – as well as gliding down the world's fastest zipwire at speeds of around 100mph.

But the most daring feat was her commitment to canine

companions. As a Puppy Raiser, Iris would look after a dog for 12-16 months and lead them through training – as well as providing the pup with a happy home.



DOG'S LIFE: Iris Chapple trained Tigger to guide others through their everyday experiences

She would take them to a variety of environments – from church to trains – to help them get used to the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Iris lives in a small Somerset village. At the time of our interview, she was training Tigger – a black Labrador 'full of bounce' – as indicated by his name from the Winnie the Pooh stories. She was also looking after a retired Guide Dog called Kim.

Iris retired to her MMHS property with husband Rik in 2004. Over the years, the puppies created happy household memories. Sadly, after two major strokes, husband Rik died in 2017. 'I'd never have done any of my activities without Rik's encouragement and support through the years,' said Iris. 'I owe him a huge amount!' 🐾

'We became like teenage backpackers'

It couldn't have been timed better. Chair of MMHS Board Revd Alan Taylor celebrated his 75th birthday during our own 75th anniversary year.

Alan and wife Dorothy – whose birthday is the same date – marked the occasion with a quiet winter weekend. That's unusual for them.

Over the years they've created such dramatic memories as praying with past US President Jimmy Carter, climbing the O2 and backpacking across the northern hemisphere – but not all at the same time.

That's as well as serving churches in East Anglia and the West Country, having two children and four

grandchildren, and retiring to an MMHS property in 2013.

They met Jimmy Carter while visiting American friends in 2016. On a long drive from Florida to Tennessee, they stopped at the ex-president's church in Plains, Georgia.

Alan and Dorothy climbed the O2 in 2020 to mark 49 years of marriage. There's no lift or escalator. Kitted out with harness and hook, they clipped onto the walkway and up they went.

Backpacking in 2009 was the most impressive trek. Alan had earned his first sabbatical, so they set off on a tour from Lindisfarne, Northumbria, to Lake



WONDER WALKERS: Alan and Dorothy Taylor have never let age define them, as they have travelled the globe

Junaluska, USA – the long way round.

'We became like teenage backpackers with a rucksack, carry bag and shoulder bag each for three months,' said Alan. 'Lindisfarne was a sacred starting point. We finished up at a Methodist convention centre at Lake Junaluska in North Carolina.' 🏠

How Meryl beat the lockdown blues

Photo: Ross-on-Wye Town Council



COVID CONCERN: MMHS resident Meryl Bedford used her time home alone by checking that others were alright. She is pictured with late husband Derek

Meryl Bedford was one of millions hit by lockdown loneliness. Praying about her isolation, she had an idea.

How were others coping with Corona life? Hidden in her MMHS home, she consulted her local church directory.

She started phoning every number – then became more strategic. 'I thought I should ring the people who are by themselves,' she said from her house by the Wales-England border.

Meryl asked church friends how they were getting on. They'd laugh about her stories of lockdown life – like trying to squeeze a chair through a loft hatch.

'It helps me,' she told us about her phone-a-friend initiative, 'and I hope it helps them as well!'

Loneliness is inevitable. Meryl and husband Derek had stuck together through thick and thin, but had to live apart when Derek moved into a nursing home.

Lancashire born and bred, they had married in 1962.

Derek retired on health grounds in 1992. He and Meryl moved into an MMHS property. Ever the community activists, Derek and Meryl became Mayor and Mayoress of Ross-on-Wye in 2001 and 2007. Sadly, Derek died in 2020. 🏠



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