

The Cultural History of the Building

Summary Account Of The Remarkable Religious, Educational, Artistic And Social Welfare Activities Undertaken By The Ministry Of The Great George Street Chapel



From the beginning Great George Street Chapel had an active involvement in artistic and educational work. The first minister of the Great George Street Chapel, Dr Thomas Raffles, was also the minister of the previous chapel on the site.(ministry 1812-1860), His biographer wrote : "Perhaps no minister among Congregationalists ever preached more sermons or travelled more miles in doing his Master's work than Dr Raffles". But Dr Raffles was also almost as evangelical in artistic and educational causes as he was in his religious beliefs, and used his literary associations to bring the church into close contact with some of the leading 'men of letters' of his time.

This tradition was then further developed in response to the changes which were shaping late 19th Century Liverpool as - during the ministry of the Rev. Samuel Pearson, M.A. (1869-1888) - the character of the neighbourhood around the Chapel changed "owing to the removal of wealthy and influential families to the suburbs".

Social work was added to the already existing artistic and educational work, to meet the growing pressures of poverty and industrialisation. Activities included a Labour (Unemployment) Bureau ; a Tontine Sick and Burial Society ; night classes in first aid, languages and commerce ; a Temperance Society ; a brotherhood enabling men to form small libraries of their own ; and a Tonic Sol-Fa Choral Society.



But the biggest attraction at the Chapel was a national movement known as the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Service, which became most firmly established in Liverpool at Great George Street Chapel under the Rev. J Nuttall (ministry 1891-1900), who also extended it to include a Pleasant Wednesday Evening Service for shop assistants, as this was their night off. Rev. Nuttall's biographer noted that "to adapt his church to the changed conditions of the neighbourhood, Mr Nuttall has thrown himself enthusiastically into the P.S.A. movement" and that "the Society in connection with Great George Street Chapel is one of the largest in the kingdom, having a membership of 2,000".

In more recent years there was a further expansion in the social work of the church under the ministry of the Rev. William Paxton (1925-34) and his son the Reverend Leslie Paxton (* DATES). This time the emphasis was on youth, and around 1930 the church took over the Royal Assembly Rooms facing it in order to accommodate the numbers attending its various meetings. The Reverends William and Leslie Paxton were also instrumental in attracting the most distinguished of speakers to the Great George Street Congregation Church Lecture Society (1929-1940), including Lady Baden-Powell, Rt Hon Wedgewood Benn, Vera Brittain, Sir Malcolm Campbell, G.K.Chesterton, St. John Ervine, A.P.Herbert,

Jennie Lee, Bertrand Russell, Edward Shackleton, Edith Sitwell, and Hugh Walpole.

LECTURES 1916-17	
Alternate Thursday Evenings at 8 o'clock.	
18.8	1917
Oct. 6—PETER ABRAHAM BROWN. "Spain."	Jan. 7—COL. HERMAN RUSSELL, R.A.S. "Germany from Within."
Oct. 22—VERA BRYTAN. "Marriage and Men in these Thirty Years."	Jan. 22—MISS HENDERSON "How long and how to sing them." (Edward Fortington at the Piano)
Nov. 8—JENNY LEE "Cromwell's Time and Ours."	Feb. 4—EDWARD FORTINGTON "Some Men of J. M. Barrie."
Nov. 15—SIR MALCOLM CAMPBELL. "The Last of Speed."	Feb. 18—LESLIE PAXTON "On Keeping a Diary."
Dec. 2—EDWARD SHACKLETON "Arctic Exploration."	Mar. 4—WILSON PATRICK "John Galsworthy."
Dec. 17—MORRIS BROWN, R.C. "The Miracle of Imagination."	Mar. 18—LESLIE PAXTON "My Father."

Admission only on showing this ticket.
If unable to attend please loan to a friend—this will be a help to the lecturer

* Note : the dates of the Reverend Leslie Paxton's ministry are being researched

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