

FRIENDS OF DUKINFIELD OLD HALL CHAPEL
www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk/dukinfieldoldhallchapel.htm

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ANNUAL REPORT 1 APRIL 2012 to 31 MARCH 2013

Para 1: All together the Committee met formally on six occasions during the year ended 31 March 2013. Officers were appointed at the AGM on 16 November 2012, being Alan Rose (Chair), Mary Whitehead (Vice-Chair), Jackie Tucker (Treasurer) and Roy Parkes (Secretary). Other members of the Committee are Valerie Bowker, Christine Clough, Ron Johnson, Gay Oliver (Web Manager), Dawn Buckle (or an alternate member of Dukinfield Old Chapel (Unitarian)). Co-opted members are Judith Harris (wef 18 December 2012) and Janet Ford (wef 1 July 2013).

Para 2: The Committee are pleased to announce that Andrew Gwynne, Member of Parliament for Denton and Reddish, whose constituency includes Dukinfield, has kindly agreed to become Patron of the Friends.

Para 3: On 5 April 2012 the Committee met John Miller and others from the Heritage Trust for the North West who explained that the Greater Manchester Building Preservation Trust, a subsidiary of the Heritage Trust for the North West, would, in principle, support the efforts of the Friends in our efforts to retain the building. He agreed also to take soundings about a new government-funded initiative by the Architectural Heritage Fund to see whether we could take advantage of it.

Para 4: During May and June 2012, we were able to display material about the Chapel at the annual exhibition of historical Dukinfield photographs at Dukinfield Library, thanks to the organiser, Councillor John Taylor. The Chair and the Secretary gave a talk at the Library on 29 May 2012.

Para 5: The positive result of John Miller's approaches (para 3) was that on 11 July 2012 Jo Hill from the Architectural Heritage Fund came on a site visit, also attended by Catherine Jones (Conservation Officer, Tameside MBC), and Councillor John Taylor. Jo Hill confirmed her understanding of the situation by kindly preparing the Minutes of the meeting and noting the complexities of the present ownership, the reluctance of Tameside Council to pursue an Urgent Works Notice against the owners for financial reasons, the reluctance of the Friends to own or be responsible for the building, the possibility of the Greater Manchester Building Preservation Trust purchasing the building, the concern of English Heritage about the building but also the chance of some EH funding, and the need for an updated planning application and conservation management plan. Jo Hill agreed to clarify what grants may be available from English Heritage.

Para 6: On 9 September 2012, the Secretary and Valerie Bowker, as part of Heritage Open Days, led a walk to and around the Chapel, by kind permission of Bardsleys.

Para 7: English Heritage called a meeting of interested parties on 29 October 2012, attended by John Miller, Catherine Jones and the Secretary. EH said they would finance a

'Stage I Study' by Consultants, to review the documentation prepared for the 2008 planning permission and the present condition of the building, and provide full costings for its stabilisation. The Greater Manchester Archaeological Survey were also asked to investigate possible burials and other archaeological evidence inside the curtilage of the building. As part of Stage I a new planning application would be prepared, together with a grant application to EH to fund, as Stage 2, a substantial proportion of the stabilisation works, under the Historic Buildings, Monuments and Designed Landscapes (HBDML) programme.

Para 8: The Secretary and other members of the Committee attended a number of meetings of an Advice Panel re terms of reference, tendering procedure, choice of successful Contractor, etc. Ivan Wilson, Architect, was appointed as the Contractor. The Committee meeting of 18 December 2012 were also informed that Bardsleys had agreed in principle to arranged access across their land to the Chapel on a monthly basis, and to give consideration to reasonable requests on other occasions. This would require an agreement to be lodged with the Land Registry as a land charge enforceable against all future owners of the surrounding land needed for access.

Para 9: The Committee on 28 January 2013 decided to invite Ivan Wilson and his team to meet them so that the Committee could inform the Consultants of their vision for the future of the building. In the meantime some essential minimum stabilisation works had been taking place prior to the archaeologists going on site.

Para 10: On 4 March 2013 the Committee and some other members of the Friends, plus representatives of Dukinfield Old Hall Congregational Church and Dukinfield Old Chapel (Unitarian), met Ivan Wilson, his colleague Stephen Clinch, and Mary Clemence, a Conservationist working as part of Mr. Wilson's team on this project. Firstly, Mr. Wilson reported on the findings of the archaeological dig to date: two graves had been found and three post-holes, possibly from a pre-Tudor building. Secondly, the Architects presented some preliminary suggestions and drawings for final treatment of the site. Discussion centred mainly around the surfaces at ground level, planting, the boundary treatment, including fencing and security, access by vehicles, sight-lines from outside the site, display of redundant stones and timbers, seating and shelter, and interpretation panels. The Architects said they would give consideration to all the views expressed, including those of John Miller, whom the Secretary, the Vice-Chair and Christine Clough would be visiting on the following day (5 March 2013). Thirdly, Mary Clemence said she was drawing up a statement of significance of the building, to accompany grant applications. As well as its recorded historical importance, several people spoke passionately about how the building connected the remote past with the present, giving Dukinfield residents a sense of place and pride. Members of the two churches said the Old Hall Chapel was part of the history of their present organisations and some recalled when it was part of an active Church. Mary Clemence said she sensed that the building could become a focus for the community to explore further their reminiscences and history, involving the younger generation as well.

Para 11: The Consultants' final Stage I report was presented at an Open Meeting organised by the Friends on 8 April 2013.

Para 12: The Committee have considered a number of matters such as publicity, further research including oral history, and relations with other organisations, and hope to report positively to the next AGM.

Roy Parkes
Secretary
20 November 2013