

## Baptist Historical Society: Local Church History Review

*Brook Street Chapel, Derby*, 141pp, 293mm x 207mm, 121 illustrations, paperback. Published by the Author, 21 Cobthorne Drive Allestree Derby DE22 2SY, 2006, ISBN n/a, £12.95 plus £2.05 p&p (UK).

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The Brook Street Chapel in Derby has, on one level, a history of growth and decline common to many central city churches and chapels, but its human and theological story is more complex and interesting than that simple line on a graph. The original building of 1802 resulted from the growing numbers adhering to the General Baptists of the New Connexion cause in Derby, starting with the work of the Reverend Dan Taylor in 1789. This history lucidly charts the complex story of schism and expansion during the next fifty years. Expansion led the General Baptists to build a new, larger, chapel nearby, but they continued to use Brook Street for Sunday Schools and weekday meetings after its lease to the Wesleyan Reform Methodists in 1856. Again, the history of this break-away group takes many twists and turns, but the reader is never lost. It is a fascinating story of a group, fiercely independent, that was never wholly absorbed into the wider Methodist movement. Closure came in 2002 but this interesting building, visible evidence of 200 years of change, was saved by a sensitive restoration and is now a flourishing restaurant.

The Radford family had many years of involvement with Brook Street chapel and the author held several church offices, including organist for over twenty years. This book is, therefore, a labour of real faith and love, but at the same time controlled by the pen of someone who is a noted railway historian. The text is greatly enhanced by the illustrations, many in colour, showing every facet of the chapel's history and including many original documents. The forty-five pages of appendices, listing all known memorials and transcribing all extant registers for both causes, will be of great interest and benefit to family historians. The only small criticism that can be levelled is that the book would have benefited from closer proof reading to eliminate the spattering of minor errors it contains. Nevertheless this is a unique story ably and definitively told, and which I can thoroughly recommend.

William Featherstone, a trustee of the Dr Williams's Library