

Celebrating history



ACT NOW

Why not pop in and see for yourself the next time you are in Leicester?

In September, Bishop Street Methodist Church in Leicester opened its new Heritage Room to the public. Alison Skinner tells how the project came into being.

Left: Xx



Above: Xx
Below: Xx

It all began with a question from Jill Marsh, who was minister at Bishop Street from 2003 to 2014: Why not make the church vestry into a heritage room?

The vestry was an ideal space. It contained a portrait of John Wesley and an original oil painting of William Lewis, the Presbyterian who admired Wesley and who, in 1753, gave the first Methodist congregation premises in which to worship.

In 2013, we applied for a Connexional Grant and were awarded a grant of £13,850 that August. The following month, the Heritage team began clearing the room and researching the history of early Methodism in Leicester.

By the end of April 2014, two display boards were installed in the cafe area. Visitors could now gain an understanding of the role of Methodism in Leicester and the part played by Bishop Street Church. One important discovery (via a letter to the Methodist Recorder) was an image of our architect, the Revd William Jenkins.

As part of the City Council's Story of Leicester, we helped to design an external information board. The vestry was

redecorated, new track lighting installed, the remaining clutter removed and the portraits restored. It was almost complete with a much cleaner, brighter feel, and furniture inherited from the nineteenth century.

Saturday 13 September was Heritage Open Doors Day. The newly framed photographs arrived at 9:15am, and the team worked hard to hang them, along with the explanatory texts, ready for visitors arriving from 10:00 am. On the day, the room contained a light box for the viewing of Victorian lantern slides which proved a popular attraction. A collection of old Missionary Society collecting boxes; provoked many memories of Sunday School days among visitors along with an old pulpit Bible presented in 1842 and old annual reports. All in all 83 people came through the door on the day.

The Chapel café attracts visitors daily. The room is sufficiently complete for visitors to enjoy but there is still much to do. Currently the room can be visited on weekdays between 10:00am and 3:00pm, or by arrangement.

