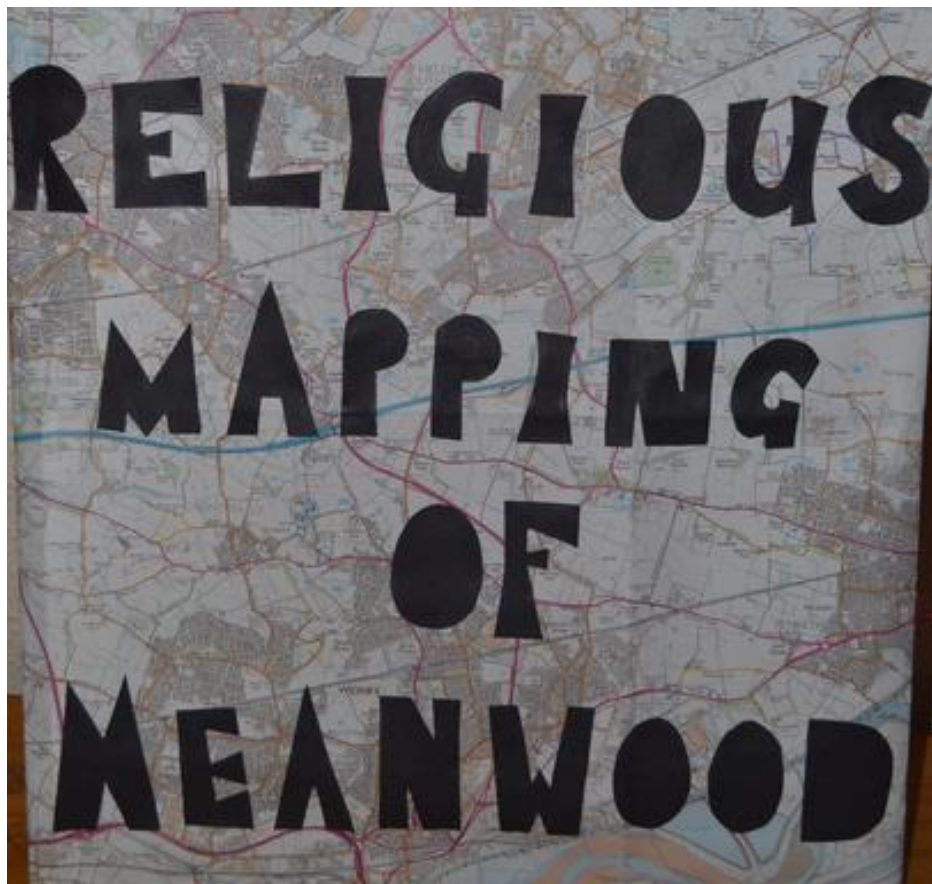


The Religious Mapping of Leeds: Meanwood

Religion in an ‘Age of Austerity’ and the Big Society: A Case Study of Meanwood



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This report would not have been possible without the help of many people.

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Introduction

The 'Religious Mapping of Leeds' has been a project in Theology and Religious Studies Department at the University of Leeds since the 1990s, stemming from the Community Religions Project which began in 1976, conducting 'empirical research on religion and religions 'near at hand' in the cities of Leeds and Bradford and beyond'.¹ The primary aim of the Religious Mapping project is to give an understanding of religion in a community in the Leeds area. This year, 2013, the area to be mapped was Meanwood, a suburban area located in the city of Leeds. As an area that has never been 'mapped' before, the opportunity to provide original and innovative research was an exciting opportunity for the group.

After conducting fieldwork in the early stages of the project, the group came to notice that the local community was very important to the people of Meanwood, and with the numerous places of worship, charity events, and social groups present in the area, we found that religions had their own place and role within the community. As well as documenting the places of worship within Meanwood in the directory (see directory) and describing the various religious groups, institutions and organised activities, the main aim of this report is to understand how religion contributes to the community of Meanwood in an 'age of austerity' and the Big Society. In addition to giving the report a focus and structure, we feel that assessing religious communities and their role in an 'age of austerity' and Big Society will be a timely academic

¹ Community Religions Project *Online* Available from: <http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/> (2013) [Accessed on 24/04/2013].

contribution. It is also an avenue currently being researched by two PhD students within Theology and Religious Studies.²

In a time of economic downturn and budget cuts in the public sector and beyond, where do religious communities fit into the Big Society vision? Undoubtedly, a controversial policy, our aim is not to focus solely on the opinions that the community of Meanwood have of the Big Society itself, but rather to understand the vital contributions that religious communities and establishments have during this time of austerity, and its effect on their work. By carrying out interviews, participant observation and academic research we hope to present how and to what extent the valuable services that religious organisations provide in Meanwood have been affected by the 'age of austerity' and Big Society.

In the report we will discuss the context of our research, in addition to displaying our findings. This will include:

- Methodology;
- History of Meanwood;
- The 'Age of Austerity' and Big Society;
- Present Day Meanwood and Responses to Deprivation;
- Interfaith and Intrafaith;
- Ecumenism- InterAct: A Case Study;
- The Youth and Younger Generation.

² Jane Lindsay and Caroline Starkey *Religion, the Local Authority and the Big Society in a Northern Metropolitan City* (Unpublished Presentation, 2012).

Throughout our research we found numerous examples of the work that religious communities in Meanwood are involved with; at times it felt like we could have continued indefinitely. However, due to the limits of time and words, we had to draw a line under our research. We hope to provide a snapshot of the dynamic and bustling religious community in Meanwood at present, which undoubtedly will have already progressed and changed by the time we present this report.

Methodology

In terms of the research process itself, how and why did we make and implement our decisions? One of the initial key decisions was to discern the geographical boundaries of the area. In order to decide on boundaries that displayed the most accurate reflection of Meanwood's geographical location, we consulted our local contact, Mary Bradley, the curate of Holy Trinity Church. After reviewing various maps and literature, it was decided that the Parish of Holy Trinity would offer boundaries which encompassed and reflected what the residents defined as Meanwood, along with the inclusion of its prominent features. However, it was evident that there would be times when it was necessary to work outside of the prescribed boundaries. For example, in choosing to interview the Vicar of St Matthews Church- a church involved in the InterAct initiative,³ but situated in Chapel Allerton.

Throughout the research it was important that methodological pluralism was employed- an approach which 'reconciles different methodological approaches'.⁴ This allowed for different methodologies to be utilised rather than 'neglecting...

³ See *InterAct: A Case Study*.

⁴ Michael Martin, *Verstehen The Uses of Understanding in Social Science* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2000), p.239.

important insights by concentrating exclusively on one methodology'.⁵ Underpinning our collective research and all Religious Mapping projects is the methodology and theory described as 'religious mapping', an approach which allows 'for the study and representation of religion[s] in a bounded space'.⁶ Furthermore, the project deployed an ethnographic orientation in order to provide a rationale for the group's research. Bryman highlights the method's strengths as; 'immersion, observation, engagement and understanding',⁷ all of which were crucial in upholding the project's aims. Rather than just reading about the community, immersing ourselves in and observing religions and secular activities and/ or services allowed the group to develop a stronger grasp of what characterised the community of Meanwood. It additionally allowed the group to forge relationships with the local community. Such relationships enabled the group to identify the key community figures, consequently leading to interviews.

Moreover, the orientation ensured broadly qualitative data was collected. Qualitative data was preferred over quantitative data for the specific purpose of the project. Quantitative data is typically statistical, gathered through secondary sources or via structured interviews. The concerns were that it would provide a data set with too narrow a focus, in addition to being time- consuming and requiring expertise that the group did not possess. Instead, qualitative data revealed in-depth and original insight into the role and experiences of the religious community of Meanwood.

Participant observation was the method first deployed in the research. The method meant that group members were immersed in, observed and listened to religious and

⁵ Ibid, p239.

⁶ Kim Knott *Spatial Methods* FROM Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (ed) *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 491-500 (p.493).

⁷ Alan Bryman *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p.432.

secular meeting/ services.⁸ To ensure the research was ethically robust, we conducted overt participant observation and gained the informed consent of gatekeepers. This meant issuing consent forms and information sheets detailing the nature of the project. We were fortunate to be welcomed and accepted by a large majority of those places visited, actively encouraged to question members. For example, on a visit to Holy Trinity Church, the group were met by the curate who guided members around the church, introduced them to the congregation, and before leaving provided material concerning the local area and upcoming local events. However, this is only one example; all group members could recount similar instances.

Many religious bodies were keen to share their new work with the group, and their involvement in the report has enabled a recognition and possible platform for several initiatives. Furthermore, we at times had a role in disseminating information, meaning that those being researched benefited from involvement.⁹ For example, Pentecostal church Power Connections “brings the African flavour to the church”¹⁰ through song and dance within worship. With the congregation members being from black ethnic backgrounds, and one South-Asian member, Pastor Joseph was keen for our input on how to advertise Power Connections to other ethnicities.

After acquiring initial knowledge and understanding of the area, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews; ‘a very useful technique for collecting data which would likely not be accessible using techniques as observation or questionnaires’.¹¹

The interviews were conducted with gatekeepers and afforded the group an

⁸ Ibid p.342.

⁹ Melanie Jane Prideaux *Faiths Together? Muslim- Christian Co- Working on a Publicly Funded Project in Beeston Hill, South Leeds*. (Leeds: University of Leeds, 2008). p. 127.

¹⁰ Joseph Isimite *Personal Interview* (05/05/2013).

¹¹ Blaxter, Hughes and Tight *How to Research* (3rd edn.) (New York: Two Penn Plaza, 2006), p. 172.

opportunity to ask specific questions relating to the complex religious and socio-economic character of the area. It additionally meant that participants were able to offer personal experiences of their community, embellishing the project with a unique perspective. To gain participants for the interviews we selected our sample, mostly referring to those who were heavily involved with their congregation and/ or community.

As with any research, the group encountered problems; the most challenging was access. The Meanwood community were fantastic in their support, enthusiasm and cooperation. However, there were those within Meanwood who displayed differing levels of engagement to both the local community and the project. For example, we had experience with some organisations that did not respond to interview requests or allow observation of their services. Although the reason behind such reluctance is unclear and by no means definitive, it is possible that our aims were misconstrued. Organisations may have felt that such publicity may be negative and attempted to protect their congregation, and to a greater extent their religion. Furthermore, there have been instances of language barriers which have contributed to a misunderstanding of intentions as well as a difficulty for the group as researchers. Although fortunate to be able to gather data via other means, restricted access to some organisations has meant that we were unable to include their insights in the report.

Moreover, there were at times concerns in terms of how the group members themselves were perceived among the local religious community. It was therefore important to initially establish with the organisation being observed and/or questioned that our position was as outside researchers and not potential congregation members so as not to affect our findings.

Additionally, being the close-knit community that Meanwood is, we were on occasions uninformed of the exact meeting times of services. Using information from websites and posters as a basis for such schedules meant we arrived in Meanwood to find that the services were not taking place. Such experiences allowed us to grasp the close community relationship between Meanwood's residents- advertisement was unnecessary when word-of-mouth sufficed.

It was imperative that the report was accurate in its representation of the local area and community so as not offend or impinge any of the local organisations on-going work. In order to do so, many of the quotes cited in the report are anonymised. In addition, there was considerable care taken in drafting the report and offering those community partners involved an opportunity to read and offer feedback on drafts before final publication.

Finally, as with a project of any scale but especially with one of this size and with such a broad spectrum of research paths that could have been taken, time was an obstacle. In the short period of eleven weeks it was impossible to visit everywhere and interview everyone. Despite such challenges, we hope that through our research we have produced a comprehensive report which the local and wider community will find useful.

History of Meanwood

By giving an account of Meanwood's religious and economic history, coupled with a detailed description of the contemporary economic and religious character,¹² we hope to provide an overview of the area.

¹² See '*Present Day Meanwood*'

Meanwood is situated in the north- west of Leeds, described by Hopwood as an area from ‘the source of the beck at Adel and Bramhope to the point crossed by Meanwood Road’.¹³ It was not until 1847¹⁴ that ‘Meanwood’ became the formal name for the entire village,¹⁵ being named after its woods; *maene wudu* meaning ‘The Common Wood’.¹⁶ According to Miss Anna Hellier who wrote a description of Meanwood in Methodist magazine in 1932, ‘Meanwood [is] a quiet country village in the midst of green fields and far from any bus route’.¹⁷ Eighty- one years later, and on various bus routes, Meanwood is certainly part of the city of Leeds. However, the portrayal of Meanwood as a country village has remained, with most residents describing it as ‘the village within a city’.¹⁸

Meanwood’s Religious History

Meanwood’s religious history has always been overwhelmingly Christian. One of the first Christian buildings built in Meanwood was Holy Trinity Church.¹⁹ The church was founded in memory of Christopher Beckett by his sisters.²⁰ Records indicate that the church and its grounds covered nearly two acres. Its construction began in 1847, and subsequently the first Parish of Meanwood was formed in the same year.²¹

¹³ Arthur Hopwood *Brief History of Meanwood*. (Leeds, 1981).

¹⁴ Leeds City Council *Online. Meanwood- Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan* Available from:

<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/meanwood%20ca%20appraisal%20and%20management%20plan%20-%20final%20version.pdf> (2008) [Accessed 16th April 2013].

¹⁵ Arthur Hopwood and Frederic Casperson *Meanwood: Village, Valley, Industry and People*. (Leeds, 1986) p.5.

¹⁶ Hopwood and Casperson p.5.

¹⁷ Cited in Hopwood and Casperson p.41.

¹⁸ Peter Bewell; assisted by Bryan Evans, Arthur Hopwood and Doreen Wood *Meanwood in Pictures Volume 3* (Leeds: M.V.A.Publications, 2007) p.2.

¹⁹ C Ruston *Meanwood Quarries & Quarrymen* (Horsforth: Propagator Press. 2006) p.19.

²⁰ Hopwood and Casperson p. 30.

²¹ Hopwood p 2.

There was also a notable growth of Methodism in the area, which led to the construction of the first Meanwood Methodist Church in 1881.²² Due to the increasing presence of Methodists the building was expanded after seven years,²³ highlighting the popularity of Methodism in Meanwood at the time. Unfortunately, the precise dates of Methodism's origins in Meanwood are unknown, although it is thought that Methodists have worshipped in the area since around 1768.²⁴ Although there are other denominations and religions present within the area, there is little known about their origins. Academic sources on the religious history of Meanwood refer only to the Parish of Holy Trinity and Methodist Church, suggesting that both are the oldest religious traditions in the area.

The Economic History of Meanwood

There is little known about Meanwood's economic and social situation before the nineteenth century. What is known is that during the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century, Meanwood was home to a labouring working class and existence was a struggle, particularly as the majority of work that was available was either in the quarries, the tan- yards or on the farms.²⁵

By the nineteenth century Meanwood was renowned for its tanneries; the last one, built in 1857, supported 100 families. There was a noticeably high rate of illness in the last century within Meanwood, particularly due to measles and whooping cough epidemics.²⁶ Yet, despite the low standards of life that Meanwood residents faced, there were those in the area conscious of such issues who initiated a variety of

²² Holy Trinity Church *Online- Church History* Available from: <http://www.holytrinitymeanwood.org.uk/files/history.shtml> [Accessed 16th April 2013].

²³ Hopwood and Casperson p. 37.

²⁴ Holy Trinity *Meanwood 'Welcome'* 1st Edition. [Unpublished, 2009] p. 34.

²⁵ Hopwood and Casperson p 41.

²⁶ Hopwood and Casperson pp. 41-42.

organisations and societies in an attempt to raise the standard of life for its inhabitants.²⁷ For example; a cricket club, Meanwood floral and horticultural show and the Meanwood institute, all of which remain a part of community life today.

Big Society and the ‘Age of Austerity’: An Introduction

Austerity

Before going into detail about the religious communities of Meanwood and the services they provide, a discussion of the ‘age of austerity’ and Big Society strategy may be useful. The UK is currently experiencing the first ‘double- dip’ recession since the financial chaos of 1975.²⁸ Stephen Boyle, Royal Bank of Scotland’s head of group economics stated; “it’s the worst economic performance since at least 1830, outside post- war demobilisations... it’s worse than the Great Depression.”²⁹ As a result of the global recession of 2008, the UK is now experiencing an ‘age of austerity’. The term ‘austerity’ refers to governmental measures implemented in an effort to reduce their budget deficit due to prior overspending. Austerity measures contain policies that cut government spending and/ or raise taxes, which in the case of the UK, is both. For example, in April 2011, the government introduced an income tax band cut and a higher stamp duty, whilst also implementing a housing allowance cap and child benefit freeze.³⁰ The particular austerity measures within the UK are unparalleled; ‘previously there hasn’t been more than two consecutive years of

²⁷ Hopwood and Casperson p.42.

²⁸ Money Marketing *Online* Available from: <http://www.moneymarketing.co.uk/regulation/ons-figures-confirm-uk-double-dip-recession/1051903.article> (2013) [Accessed on 02/05/2013].

²⁹ The Telegraph *Online* Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9826857/Britain-is-experiencing-worse-slump-than-during-Great-Depression.html> (2013) [Accessed on 02/05/2013].

³⁰ HM Treasury- Budget 2011 *Online* Available from: http://cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/2011budget_complete.pdf (2011) [Accessed on 11/05/2013].

spending cuts. Mr Osborne wants to attempt seven straight years'.³¹ In order to restore the economy, there has been over 375 million pounds put into the banking system 'through bailouts and a series of 'unconventional' measures', yet only a small portion of this has been poured back into the economy.³²

Big Society

Alongside these austerity measures, the coalition government has removed some of central government's responsibility over local communities. By offering greater responsibility to neighbourhoods, local communities, charities and social enterprises, the government intends to reduce the budget deficit and to mend 'our broken society'.³³ Such a perception of society was also present under the New Labour government, particularly in the wake of the 2001 riots. Neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion initiatives were launched, with a focus on the 'social capital' of religious communities.³⁴ Under the coalition government, with different motivations, the incentives for society and community are similar. The intentions of the Big Society are to create a society 'where the leading force for progress is social responsibility, not state control'.³⁵ Hence, there is a shift from a domineering government toward a 'Big Society', with the Cabinet Office stating; 'it's about putting more power in people's hands- a massive transfer of power from Whitehall to local

³¹ The Source *Online* Available from: <http://blogs.wsj.com/source/2012/02/01/sheer-scale-of-u-k-austerity-measures-revealed/> (2013) [Accessed on 02/05/2013].

³² Global Research *Online* Available from: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/uk-economy-falls-into-double-dip-recession/5313842> (2012) [Accessed 02/05/2013].

³³ Conservative Manifesto *Online* Available from: <http://www.conservatives.com/~media/Files/Activist%20Centre/Press%20and%20Policy/Manifestos/Manifesto2010>. p.35. (2010) [Accessed 02/05/2013].

³⁴ Melanie Prideaux p. 81.

³⁵ Conservative Manifesto *Online* Available from: <http://www.conservatives.com/~media/Files/Activist%20Centre/Press%20and%20Policy/Manifestos/Manifesto2010>, p.37. (2010) [Accessed 02/05/2013].

communities'.³⁶ The government has thus attempted to remove the 'red tape', whilst simultaneously offering motivation and incentives to those who are contributing to their communities. Furthermore, the government is hoping to capitalise on the success on the game makers at 2012 London Olympics, using programmes such as 'Join In' and 'National Citizen Service' to create a 'new generation of volunteers'.³⁷

However, the coalition government's Big Society initiative has received mixed reviews from the general public. In January 2013, Sir Stephen Bubb, head of the chief executives body Aveco, believed the Big Society to be 'going nowhere'; whilst there is 'huge frustration' amongst some charities who believe that the policy has in fact been neglected.³⁸ In this report, we intend to understand what affect the coalition's Big Society policy is really having on the area of Meanwood, and in particular its religious groups. Has it been accepted, rejected or considered irrelevant? Religious groups already play a significant role in the community, for example, '37, 600 churches in the UK engaged in community work beyond their Sunday service',³⁹ therefore we intend to assess whether faith groups within Meanwood were already active in the community, or if the Big Society policy gave them the support they needed.

The 'Age of Austerity' and Big Society: A Case Study of Meanwood

As we intend to display throughout this report, in Meanwood the Big Society project has largely been met with indifference. Welfare and community work have been

³⁶ Cabinet Office *Online* Available from: <http://old.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview> [Accessed 02/05/2013].

³⁷ BBC *Online* Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20931121> (2013) [Accessed 02/05/2013].

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ CRC *Online* Available from: <http://www.crc-online.org.uk/Big%20society%20policy%20paper%202011.pdf> p.12. (2011) [Accessed 02/05/2013].

central to faith groups for years,⁴⁰ particularly since the 2008 recession. The Economic Impact Assessment of Faith Communities in the Yorkshire and Humber project in 2009 stated; 'just at the point that the national economic downturn began to bite, the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum uncovered solid evidence which shows that people of faith are there, in those communities which are hardest hit, providing support and overcoming injustice'.⁴¹ This statement supports our findings in Meanwood, with the local community uniting to help others in the 'age of austerity', largely driven by religious groups. In recent times 'traditional sources of funding such as membership fees and almost all government grants have become much harder to access',⁴² meaning that remaining financially stable whilst reaching out in the community has become extremely difficult. Furthermore, religious groups' initiatives preceded government initiatives, thus suggesting the Big Society has little meaning for faith communities in Meanwood. In addition, 'it is difficult in an age of austerity for critics not to link the Big Society with a devolution of social responsibility as much as of power'.⁴³ Indeed, with services shifting from the domain of the government to the realm of the public, it is argued that the government has become less accountable. As the report demonstrates, religious groups in Meanwood have taken on more responsibility due to the sheer growth of community needs. The Big Society strategy may encourage such responsibility, yet the reality of the 'age of austerity' and recession has entailed more problems and less resources. Meanwood represents a community buzzing with activity to support its residents. The work of numerous

⁴⁰ Adam Dinham and Robert Jackson *Religion, Welfare and Education* FROM Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (ed.) *Religion and Change In Modern Britain*. (London: Routledge, 2012), p.277.

⁴¹ Inderjit Bhogal, HE Research and Yorkshire and Humber Faith Forums *Economic Impact Assessment of Faith Communities in Yorkshire and the Humber* (Ripon: Plug and Tap, 2009), p.5.

⁴² Dinham and Jackson p.277 (2012).

⁴³ CRC *Online* 2011.

religious groups, whether internally or with the wider community, suggests that Meanwood is far from a 'broken society'.

Present Day Meanwood

Considering Meanwood's close proximity to the city centre, the area has preserved its rich history. Indeed, most of the features discussed in the 'History of Meanwood' section still have a prominent place in the community today.⁴⁴

Religious demographics

From the middle to late twentieth century, large scale migration to Britain from outside Europe took place.⁴⁵ As an industrial city, Leeds saw an influx of migrants bringing with them various new religions, with some settling in Meanwood. Such immigration increased the diversity of faiths within the area. Although not the sole area where immigrants settled in in Leeds, Meanwood's close proximity to the city centre possibly meant the new residents could reside near work opportunities.

Yet, despite the arrival of multi- religious communities, the religion most widely practiced in Meanwood is Christianity, with 'lesser Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu populations'.⁴⁶ However, in using such data it was important to note that Leeds City Council did not use the same area boundaries as we had, meaning it was possible that some of our research may not correlate. Furthermore, the criteria utilised by the council to distinguish the religion of residents was based on the individual's

⁴⁴ The Meanwood Village Association. Available from: <http://www.meanwoodvillage.org.uk/> [Accessed on: 28/04/2013].

⁴⁵ Panikos Panayi *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism Since 1800* (Harlow: Longman 2010) p. 37.

⁴⁶ Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) Profile for: Meanwood *Online* Available from: <http://www.leeds.nhs.uk/mapping/JSNA/Atlases/PDF/Meanwood.pdf>. (Leeds City Council: NHS Leeds, 2011) p.5

forename and surname.⁴⁷ Assuming an association between one's name and religion is not always an accurate way to measure the religious demographics of an area, so the group was wary to rely solely on such data. Using ethnographic methods, we were able to discover first-hand some of the religious communities residing in Meanwood. However, highlighted in the Middle Super Output Area Profile for Meanwood, there are a minority of Jewish, Hindu and Sikh communities in the area. These groups do not have recognised places of worship in the boundaries, implying they travel outside of Meanwood to worship.⁴⁸ Although such data cannot be regarded as definitive, it exhibits that Meanwood has a religiously diverse community that is nevertheless majority Christian.

Socio-Economics

It is apparent from an initial glance at Meanwood that is a fairly affluent area, with statistics to support this. Information from the Office of National Statistics 2011 census states that Meanwood is an area of low unemployment.⁴⁹ In September 2010, Waitrose supermarket opened on Meanwood Road. The opening of the Meanwood branch was surprising for some, as the chain carries with it a reputation 'catering predominantly for southerners with expensive tastes'.⁵⁰ In fact, it has been suggested that the presence of a Waitrose in an area often leads to house prices rising faster.⁵¹ The presence of such a well-known chain in the area may have had a significant affect in raising Meanwood's 'status'.

⁴⁷ MSOA Profile: Meanwood p.5

⁴⁸ MSOA Profile: Meanwood p.8

⁴⁹ Office for National Statistics- Neighbourhood Statistics *Online* Available from: http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/NeighbourhoodSummary.do?width=1&i=1001&pr_ofileSearchText=LS6+4NP (2011) [Accessed on: 12/05/2013].

⁵⁰ The Yorkshire Evening Post *Online* 'Leeds feels the Waitrose effect' Available from: <http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/latest-news/top-stories/leeds-feels-the-waitrose-effect-1-2252813> [Accessed on: 04/05/2013] (17/09/2010).

⁵¹ *Personal Interview* (04/03/2013). See also: Paul Jarman is director of country residential agencies for FPD Savill "If a Waitrose moves into an area, it is likely that the house prices will rise faster there

Furthermore, the company provides more immediate help in the community. As part of the 'Community Matters' scheme, three charities are nominated per month, with customers choosing how the donation of £1000 is divided via a token scheme.⁵² Although a secular organisation that specifically does not affiliate with religious organisation to avoid bias, the scheme benefits causes within the community. The team that select the charities attempt to choose those not funded by the government. This is particularly relevant in an 'age of austerity', whereby numerous charities and council based schemes find that there is a lack of available funding.

The economic situation in Meanwood is perhaps symbolised by the fact that opposite to Waitrose, there is an Aldi⁵³ amongst other budget stores. Despite the more affluent features of Meanwood, there are areas of deprivation; 'pockets of high unemployment, above average cancer mortality, poor health and housing'.⁵⁴ The residents of Meanwood appear to reside in varying socio-economic states, rendering it impossible to generalize the community as a whole. Although deprivation has always been present, it is possible that the recent recession and austerity measures have exacerbated the situation, affecting a wide range of people.⁵⁵

Responses to Deprivation

There have been consistent efforts by both the religious and secular community of Meanwood to tackle poverty in the area. The most recent initiative specifically aimed at tackling such issues in the community has been the North Leeds FoodBank. The FoodBank will be based in Meanwood and led by five churches in the area,

than elsewhere." The Yorkshire Evening Post *Online* Available from:

<http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/latest-news/top-stories/leeds-feels-the-waitrose-effect-1-2252813> [Accessed on: 04/05/2013] (17/09/2010).

⁵² *Personal Interview* (04/03/2013).

⁵³ Aldi *Online* Available from:

http://www.aldi.co.uk/uk/html/company/all_about_aldi.htm?WT.z_src=main [Accessed on: 04/05/2013].

⁵⁴ InterAct *Online* Available at: www.interactleeds.wordpress.com [Accessed on 12/03/2013].

⁵⁵ Vanessa Brown *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

collectively known as InterAct.⁵⁶ As a part of the Christian organisation Trussell Trust, the FoodBank charity aims to combat poverty on a local level, helping anyone in need; 'whilst we are a Christian organisation, we serve people of all faith groups and beliefs or none'.⁵⁷

The aim of the FoodBank is to support the 'hidden hungry' meaning "those that seem wealthy from the outside, but are hiding their deprivation behind a closed door".⁵⁸ The initiative is dependent on food donations from the public,⁵⁹ which is organised by volunteers along with the cooperation of professionals; 'Frontline care professionals such as doctors and social workers identify people in crisis and issue a food voucher. Clients receive three days of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable food in exchange for their food voucher'.⁶⁰

The North Leeds FoodBank signed up with the Trussell Trust on the 7th February 2013, and is therefore still in its early stages. Initially, the FoodBank proposal was met with some resistance and reservations.⁶¹ As previously discussed, many view Meanwood and the North Leeds area as fairly wealthy, and believed there would be no requirement for the service. Although emergency food parcels may provide immediate help, long term issues persevere that the FoodBank cannot address.⁶² Indeed, Leeds Churches Together in Mission noted that despite social initiatives like these that religious bodies are involved with, 'there are fewer groups directly challenging the causes of those issues through campaigning'.⁶³ As we have noted

⁵⁶ See *InterAct: A Case Study*.

⁵⁷ Trussell Trust *Online* Available from: <http://www.trusselltrust.org/> [Accessed April 2013].

⁵⁸ *Seek the Welfare of the City* Presentation at Stainbeck United Reformed Church (07/03/2013).

⁵⁹ Waitrose donated 24 trolleys of food in December- *Seek the Welfare of the City* Presentation (07/03/2013).

⁶⁰ Trussell Trust *Online*

⁶¹ *Seek the Welfare of the City* Presentation.

⁶² Angela Hughes *Personal Interview* (06/03/2013).

⁶³ Leeds Churches Together in Mission *Online- Faithful Capital* Available at: <http://www.networkleeds.com/Group/Group.aspx?ID=89289> [Accessed on 09/05/2013] p. 3. (2008).

through our research, many religious groups are directly involved in welfare during the 'age of austerity', but are somewhat distanced from the political causes of the situation.

Despite these concerns, the bid to Trussell Trust for a local FoodBank was successful. Applied in a context of the recession and 'age of austerity' where many have experienced benefit cuts and job loss, the FoodBank will allow religious bodies to promote services for those who they may not have the resources to help directly. Some churches also implement their own schemes in order to assist the community of Meanwood. For example, the Meanwood Methodist Church, who also intend to be a part of the FoodBank, host a three- course meal for £3 every Thursday open to the community.⁶⁴

Within Meanwood there is also assistance available concerning debt advice and employability. Hosted at the Meanwood Community Café in Stainbeck United Reformed Church, 'Gizzajob' is a drop-in service run by Leeds City Council, Job Centre Plus and Zest Health.⁶⁵ The scheme allows community members of any age, gender or financial status to voice their financial concerns and receive advice. Gizzajob additionally offers the opportunity for individuals to obtain and hone valuable skills such as interview techniques and the completion of applications forms in order to increase confidence and employability. The scheme highlights Stainbeck United Reformed Church's awareness of the struggles faced by many in the community.

⁶⁴ Rupert Weekes *Personal Interview* (05/05/2013).

⁶⁵ Leeds City Council *GizzaJob Project* (Leeds, 2012) [flyer].

Furthermore, the Iqra Centre is active in providing help to those struggling within Meanwood. As part of the religious month of Ramadan,⁶⁶ the members of the centre volunteered food packages to distribute locally both during the month and to celebrate the festival of Eid. There are plans to work on new poverty initiatives once the new Welfare Community Centre is built.⁶⁷ The members have additionally spoken about trying to alleviate poverty through a development of their interfaith work, as Islam, Christianity and Judaism share common views on the issue.⁶⁸

When conducting participant observation of a Jehovah's Witnesses service, it seemed that employment was a relevant topic for the congregation. Despite following the structure of the Watch Tower⁶⁹ national booklets, there was an opportunity for various discussion paths. The Jehovah's Witnesses support those within their congregation with many of their donations going towards pioneering efforts, as will be discussed later in the report. It is also important to mention that like many other religious organisations in Meanwood, Jehovah's Witnesses are likely to donate to international causes, such as natural disasters. Not only do many of these religious organisations provide financial aid within their own community and the community of Meanwood, but often contribute to worldwide charity funds.⁷⁰

Power Connections has been established for three years and is a branch of The Redeemed Christian Church of God. Donations are made during the service by members of the congregation, with the money paying for the rent, along with the

⁶⁶ M Ruthven *Islam: A very short introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 15.

⁶⁷ The Iqra Centre has recently secured an area to develop a Welfare Community Centre in the nearby area of Moortown, although its proposal has had mixed reactions despite it being open for the whole community. There was an EDL protest in Leeds on 04/05/2013 against its opening. BBC News *EDL march sees four arrests* Online Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-22418924> (05/05/2013) [Accessed on 08/05/2013].

⁶⁸ Iqra Centre Committee *Personal Interview* (02/03/2013).

⁶⁹ Watch Tower Online Available from: <http://www.jw.org/en/> [Accessed on 04/05/2013] (2013)

⁷⁰ Iqra Centre Committee *Personal Interview*.

upkeep of technological devices and catering. Power Connections also runs a bus service for those who live far away from the church, particularly helpful for the international members of the congregation new to the area of Meanwood. Additionally, the church supports its members in finding jobs, constructing CVs and assisting in the development of interview techniques. Like many of the other religious organisations in Meanwood, Power Connections is able to fund its own establishment during the 'age of austerity', as well as support its congregation members in several ways.

At present, Power Connections is not involved with any initiatives outside the congregation, but are planning to be in the very near future. The organisation has been looking into projects for involvement with particular hope to work with the homeless community in Leeds, with Pastor Joseph saying "there is always more we can do".⁷¹ As a charity, Pastor Joseph believes Power Connections has a place in the Big Society vision, and plans to apply for funding in the near future. Yet, from interviews with other religious figures, it seems that funding cannot be so easily accessed. As Power Connections has not yet had direct experience of funding application, Pastor Joseph's statement is perhaps overly optimistic.

There are also instances where religious bodies are struggling to financially support themselves following the effects of austerity measures. Meanwood Methodist Church has congregation- led services once a quarter due to the lack of ministers at the present time.⁷²

⁷¹ Joseph Isimite *Personal Interview* (05/05/2013).

⁷² Elaine Jackson *Personal Interview* (05/05/2013).

Secular and National Organisations

The *Seek the Welfare of the City* event showcased several organisations that target poverty. Christians Against Poverty⁷³ was presented at the event and supports those experiencing deprivation, working with people from varying faiths and backgrounds. CAP stated that there has been an increase in people contacting them from the Meanwood area. Although the charity is not situated in Meanwood, their experiences correlate with the assertion that people in general, and Meanwood specifically, are struggling due to recent austerity measures, such as benefit cuts, and/ or the economic downturn that have resulted in significant job loss.

An additional secular organisation available to the residents of Meanwood is the neighbourhood network Meanwood Elders' Neighbourhood Action (MENA). MENA is managed by Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS), an organisation which this year is celebrating 75 years in of responding to people in crisis situations.⁷⁴ MENA brings the elderly community of Meanwood together once a month at Stainbeck United Reformed Church, providing a hot meal as well as other support. It is relevant to note that secular bodies such as MENA utilise religious buildings. Institutions such as Stainbeck United Reformed Church situate themselves in the heart of the community, providing help through their own initiatives, or accommodating other institutions in order to house their own work.

Conclusion

It is apparent that there is a complex picture of Meanwood in terms of socio-economics. The needs of the residents are reflected through the establishment of

⁷³ CAP was briefly explored within the report -Religious Mapping of the City Centre *Online* Available from: <http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/files/2013/01/Religious-Mapping-of-Leeds-City-Centre.pdf> (University of Leeds, 2011) p.31. [Accessed on: 03/05/2013].

⁷⁴ *Email Correspondence* (01/03/2013).

various schemes, coupled with the experience of charities such as CAP, as previously mentioned. However, religious communities in the UK, and as we have seen in Meanwood, have been present long before the Big Society strategy was introduced and it has had little effect on their work; 'there is long tradition of faith-based involvement [in the UK] in meeting 'welfare' needs, especially in urban disadvantaged areas'.⁷⁵ However, the recession and the following austerity measures have in fact had significance for the religious community. The needs of Meanwood's residents have changed⁷⁶ during the 'age of austerity', and despite the positive immediate effects of schemes such as the FoodBank, there are fears that it is impossible for religious institutions to fill the void left by the government.

Interfaith and Intrafaith

Many of the community initiatives founded by the religious bodies of Meanwood are based on different religious denominations and faiths coming together. Although the area of Meanwood is predominantly Christian, all of the religious traditions present in Meanwood that we were able to research demonstrate important roles during the 'age of austerity' and Big Society. Whilst some religious groups take an 'outward' approach in their work, arranging events with other religious and secular organisations, others tend to embody an 'inward' approach, focusing their work within their own community. This is due to several possible factors. Religious organisations that have a stronger presence in the community and with other establishments often have larger representation, longer formation in the area, and therefore greater resources. A reason why some groups take an 'inward' approach at

⁷⁵ Dinham and Jackson pp. 272 – 294 (p.273). (2012)

⁷⁶ See *InterAct: A Case Study*

present is because they have not yet mobilised themselves enough to work with other institutions.

Interfaith

Religious organisations in Meanwood that adopt an 'outward' approach in their community work create a relationship with other religious groups. In a context which is rapidly changing socially, economically and religiously,⁷⁷ it is important for different religious traditions to work together and gain an understanding of each other, contributing to positive community relations. The Big Society aims to assist 'people to come together to improve their own lives'.⁷⁸ Yet, faith communities seem to have been doing this long before the policy was implemented. A local example of interfaith work is the Leeds Faith Forum, established in 1997 which 'has a strong focus on issues such as regeneration and faith based social action'⁷⁹ initiated through interfaith dialogue. In the vicinity of Meanwood, the religious communities that employ interfaith methods in their work uphold the values of the Big Society. Like Leeds Faith Forum, Meanwood interfaith work shows that relations between religious groups have been making a positive impact and improving the lives of residents in the community irrespective of government policy.

Islam and Christianity

The Iqra Education and Youth Centre was established in 2000 and is part of the national UK Islamic Mission (UKIM). Founded in 1962, UKIM is an ideological movement which aims to 'mould the entire human life according to Allah's revealed

⁷⁷ G Davie *A Rapidly Changing Context FROM Religion in Britain since 1945* (Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 1994) pp. 10-28.

⁷⁸ Cabinet Office *Online* Available from: <http://old.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview> [Accessed 02/05/2013].

⁷⁹ The Inter Faith Network for the UK *Online* Available from: <http://www.interfaith.org.uk/local/membershipissues.htm> [Accessed on: 03/05/2013] (1999-2011) See also Leeds Faith Forum *Online* Available from: <http://leedsfaithsforum.org/> [Accessed on: 03/05/2013].

Guidance, following the life example of His last Messenger, Mohammed'.⁸⁰ Although it is a community centre and not a mosque, the Iqra Centre hosts the five daily prayers which are attended by the local Muslim residents of Meanwood and Moortown. The committee of the Iqra Centre have always placed emphasis on the importance of working with those from other religious traditions and recently participated in Inter Faith Week.⁸¹ Its present involvement in the area is demonstrated by the classes and events such as 'open-days', open to all the community, funded through donations from attendees and run by volunteers.⁸²

Interfaith relations have formed between the Muslims and Christian communities in Meanwood. The partnership between St. Matthew's Church and the Iqra Centre has resulted in an 'exchange programme',⁸³ educating one another on their religious beliefs and values. Similarly, the Iqra Centre and Stainbeck United Reformed Church have previously partaken in meetings to discuss issues within the community. In addition, the centre has arranged visits on behalf of the Stainbeck United Reformed Church to the Makkah Masjid in Leeds 6 to attend an Islamic exhibition. The relationship between the two parties has led to the establishment of a 'Knit and Natter' group.

'Knit and Natter'

'Knit and Natter' is a knitting group held at the Iqra Centre which encourages a relationship between the women of the Muslim and Christian community in the Meanwood area. The women of the Iqra Centre approached the women of Stainbeck United Reformed Church after the terrorist attacks of 7th July 2005 in London. The

⁸⁰ UK Islamic Mission *Online* Available from: <http://www.ukim.org/ukim/> [Accessed: 02/05/2013] (2008).

⁸¹ Inter Faith Week *Online* Available from: <http://www.interfaithweek.co.uk/index.php/about/about-the-week>][Accessed: 02/05/2013] (2010- 2012).

⁸² Iqra Centre committee *Personal Interview* (02/03/2013).

⁸³ Iqra Centre committee *Personal Interview* (02/03/2013).

hopes were to promote a mutual understanding and respect of both faiths and that through the establishment of social activity friendships could develop. Although interfaith dialogue and respect was the initial intention of the 'Knit and Natter' group, its establishment has had a wider effect on the Meanwood area. The group has reached out into the local community, participating in interfaith community fairs hosted in local secondary schools. The actual outcome of 'Knit and Natter' has, according to Reverend Angela Hughes of Stainbeck United Reformed Church, resulted in less conflict, and allowed issues in the community to be discussed rather than "going to war over them".⁸⁴ Such a relationship encapsulates the Big Society vision; interfaith allows for a strengthening of the community, uniting people from different backgrounds in order to tackle a range of issues. Yet, 'Knit and Natter', established in 2005, also demonstrates that the religious groups of Meanwood have played a role in community cohesion predating the Big Society policy.

Planning for Interfaith

The DharmaMind Leeds group offers a weekly Beginner's Group as well as a weekly Buddhism Meditation and Teaching group.⁸⁵ Although the group does not adhere to a particular form of Buddhism, the founders, Tom McKendrick and Matthew Yates, have both had the most experience with the Zen tradition meaning the group is more likely to be allied with this form.

Despite its recent establishment approximately two years ago, there has recently been an increase in the number of attendees. Matthew suggested that the 'age of austerity' actually becomes a "breeding ground for religion and spirituality" due to the

⁸⁴ Angela Hughes *Personal Interview* (06/03/2013).

⁸⁵ The Leeds DharmaMind Buddhist Group *Online* Available from: <http://www.dharmamind.net/localgroups/leeds.htm> [Accessed on: 02/05/2013].

need to find security amidst the turmoil and uncertainty.⁸⁶ In addition to the important role of providing community services, religious institutions in Meanwood like DharmaMind also deliver emotional and spiritual support during the 'age of austerity'. DharmaMind's availability to the residents of Meanwood is important in itself, as it provides a local service that does not rely on funding; it is sustained by community donations, suggested at £3 per person, per session. At present, DharmaMind does not have links with other religious traditions. However, an expansion of the group could lead to a building of interfaith relationships and community work. Similarly, Power Connections are interested in creating links with other institutions, currently only having links with other Redeemed Christian Church of God churches due to recent establishment in the area.

Intrafaith

Religious organisations which have an 'inward' approach include the Meanwood congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. Although the Jehovah's Witnesses movement emerged from Christianity, it has developed so that it is 'no longer accommodated within it', and is therefore defined as a 'sect'.⁸⁷ This is reflected by the fact that the Jehovah's Witnesses tend to minimize their contact⁸⁸ with other institutions, focusing more on internal links. The work that the Jehovah's Witnesses congregation of Meanwood partake in can be described as 'intrafaith' which refers to when 'persons within a tradition come together with other persons of that faith tradition'.⁸⁹ Jehovah's

⁸⁶ Matthew Yates *Personal Interview* (30/04/2013).

⁸⁷ George D. Chryssides and Ron Greaves *The Study of Religion: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods*. (London and New York: Continuum, 2007) p. 29.

⁸⁸ *Ibid* p. 138

⁸⁹ Rev. Bud Heckman with Rori Picker Neiss (eds) *InterActive Faith: The Essential Interreligious Community- Building Handbook* (US: Skylight Paths, 2008) p.5.

Witnesses interact with other congregations of the same sect internationally, meaning their role during the 'age of austerity' has a clear intrafaith foundation.

After participant observation of a Sunday service, a member of the congregation explained how the Jehovah's Witnesses group attempt to support those within their community, ensuring that all those in congregation feel part of a 'family'. Furthermore, if a fellow member is struggling financially, others often make contributions; for example, offering catering services to those struggling to finance their wedding.⁹⁰

The presence of Jehovah's Witnesses in the community is often felt through their pioneering efforts- commonly the Jehovah's Witnesses knock on people's doors in order to 'disseminate their teachings' and proselytise.⁹¹ During participant observation, several members spoke of their experiences as volunteer pioneers of the faith.

Ecumenism

Ecumenism is the terminology referring to intrafaith within Christianity, and can be defined as 'the attempt to unify Christian churches'.⁹² Although the ideology of ecumenism dates from the nineteenth century, the movement originated between the 1950s- 1970s, particularly in Protestant denominations.⁹³ In 1987, the ecumenical initiative Churches Together replaced the British Council of Churches, encompassing Roman Catholics in an ecumenical body that 'deepen[s]...fellowship with the others [denominations] ...without losing what makes each interestingly different, to work

⁹⁰ *Personal Interview* (10/03/2013).

⁹¹ George D. Chryssides and Ron Greaves p. 29. (2007)

⁹² Stephen Orchard *Case Study: The Formation of the United Reformed Church*. FROM Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (eds) *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012) p. 79.

⁹³ *Ibid* p. 79.

with them towards a greater visible unity'.⁹⁴ Being established in 1987 and having its roots in the British Council of Churches⁹⁵ demonstrates the long history of Churches Together in ecumenical work and action, an example of religious groups and communities collaborating before the Big Society strategy.

Evidence of ecumenism can be found in Meanwood, particularly through the work of InterAct, an ecumenical Christian initiative based predominately in the area. Although ecumenism describes the unification of Christian denominations, the InterAct approach is very 'outward', benefiting the wider community whether religious or secular.

InterAct: A Case Study

In the year 2000, the Church of England diocese of Ripon and Leeds undertook an audit which highlighted the socio- economic inequalities existing within Meanwood.⁹⁶ Pockets of deprivation were located in the estates of Meanwood- known locally as the 'Meanwood 6'. It is significant to note that the audit was in 2000, emphasising religious communities' role in society prior to the Big Society strategy. In particular, this demonstrates religious group's role in the community cohesion and neighbourhood renewal strategies of New Labour.⁹⁷ In response to the audit, St Matthew's Baptist Church in Chapel Allerton, the Stainbeck United Reformed Church in Meanwood and the Holy Trinity Church, also in Meanwood, established the 'Three Churches Project' which evolved into 'The InterAct Church and Community Partnership' in 2005. Today, the Meanwood Valley Baptist Church and the

⁹⁴ Churches Together in Britain and Ireland *Online* Available from: <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/A/1> [Accessed on: 10/05/2013].

⁹⁵ Churches Together *Online*.

⁹⁶ Cited on: InterAct *Online*

⁹⁷ Melanie Prideaux p. 81.

Meanwood Methodist Church are also included in the partnership.⁹⁸ The United Reformed Church's history is steeped in ecumenical involvement, emerging from the unions of the movement.⁹⁹ Its ecumenical roots perhaps explain its substantial involvement with InterAct, as it has strong involvement with numerous initiatives in the areas of both Meanwood and Chapel Allerton. Notably, an African Pentecostal church, inspired by the Apostolic tradition, practice in Stainbeck United Reformed Church on a weekly basis, further emphasising its ecumenical ethos.

The ecumenical church and community partnership of InterAct actively supports the community of Meanwood, particularly focusing on estates such as the Beck Hill estate through the provision of numerous activities.¹⁰⁰ Examples include:

- Craft club;
- Drama club;
- Community café;
- Youth club

All these examples are led by volunteers from the community and local churches.

Moreover, InterAct hosts a range of social events:

- Coffee mornings;
- Cream Teas;
- Picnics;
- Day trips;
- Seasonal celebrations for events such as Shrove Tuesday.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ InterAct *Online*.

⁹⁹ Orchard p. 81.

¹⁰⁰ Vanessa Brown *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

InterAct have developed strong working relationships with local establishments such as Carr Manor Community School, the NHS, Police, and Leeds City Council. The mutually beneficial relationships allow for a highlighting of any issues- to the local council for instance- as well as ensuring the InterAct are frequently updated on current issues affecting the residents of Meanwood.¹⁰²

InterAct in the Community

Traditionally, Meanwood comprised of the 'Meanwood village', but today, Meanwood has expanded and now includes many estates. As a result of this growth, which was accompanied by new inequalities, InterAct offers engaging and creative activities, facilitating an opportunity for residents to overcome social barriers and develop relationships across varying socio- economic demographics. The aims and intentions of InterAct are therefore more socially orientated rather than religious.

During the 1950s, the ecumenical movement was to an extent founded in a 'mission context', with many church leaders viewing ecumenism as a platform for encouraging mission and evangelism.¹⁰³ However, although InterAct's religious goals aim to promote an authentic unity between the local churches of Meanwood, the intention is not proselytization. InterAct has a distinctly Christian ethos, encouraging an exploration of faith, yet its religious basis and goals regarding the churches are distinct from their social goals within Meanwood. The objectives and activities organised are religiously neutral and available to all members of the community.¹⁰⁴

InterAct in an 'Age of Austerity'

¹⁰¹ InterAct *You are invited...local activities available for people in Meanwood*. (Leeds, 2012) [flyer].

¹⁰² Vanessa Brown *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

¹⁰³ Orchard p. 79.

¹⁰⁴ InterAct *Online*.

In light of the recession of 2008 and subsequent austerity measures, Vanessa Brown, who works part time for InterAct, has noted that the needs in the community of Meanwood have changed. Prior to the economic crisis, InterAct worked with the local council to address the primary concerns of the community which were predominately environmental; dog-fouling and littering, particularly within estates.¹⁰⁵

However, following the recession and austerity measures, the struggles of the residents of Meanwood have become infinitely more serious. Unemployment levels continue to rise, meaning many more are experiencing financial strain. In March 2013, ITV News reported that unemployment in Yorkshire had risen by 0.1 per cent, thus making the region the second highest area of unemployment in the country with an estimated 9 per cent out of work.¹⁰⁶ More locally, according to the English Indices of Deprivation for 2010, unemployment levels in Meanwood are slightly higher than the national average, with income levels slightly lower than the Leeds average.¹⁰⁷

From her experience as an InterAct employee, Vanessa highlighted in an interview that there are families within Meanwood struggling to provide for the household.¹⁰⁸ Although InterAct is not equipped with the financial or logistical capacity to directly combat these issues of poverty, it signposts the help and support that is accessible from the government and charitable organisations- the previously mentioned 'Gizzajob' is a notable example.¹⁰⁹

As InterAct's paid youth worker, Vanessa herself has been affected by the consequences of austerity measures. Due to a lack of funding, InterAct has been

¹⁰⁵ Vanessa Brown *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

¹⁰⁶ ITV News *Online* Available at: www.itvnews.com/news/calendar/story/2013-03-20/unemployment-figures-for-the-region/ (2013) [Accessed on 02/05/2013]

¹⁰⁷ The English Indices of Deprivation *Online* Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6871/1871208.pdf (2010-2011) [Accessed on 02/05/2013].

¹⁰⁸ Vanessa Brown *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

forced to reduce her full time role to a part time fifteen hour contract.¹¹⁰ This speaks volumes in the effect that the ‘age of austerity’ has had on the religious, and wider, community of Meanwood. InterAct finds itself faced with much more serious issues to tackle, yet less funding to be able to do so. Angela Hughes aptly noted that it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure funding for any activities.¹¹¹ Church initiatives used to receive funding from the local council, however budget cuts have meant that revenue funding can no longer be accessed. Instead, churches must apply for other sources of financial support such as the government’s ‘Community First’ fund,¹¹² yet it seems funds are limited and not so easy to acquire.

Conclusion

Through informal discussions with church leaders, it became clear that religious groups are motivated by their faith rather than by government policy.¹¹³ Despite the economic difficulties faced by many in Meanwood, InterAct’s goal is to encourage and promote a united, empowered community who firmly hold the reins of their community and life in their own hands.¹¹⁴ Such a positive initiative serves an example for the Big Society ideal, yet it seems irrelevant for the religious community of Meanwood whose presence existed before the strategy. Despite the government’s promotion of the work that religious communities like InterAct provide, the austerity measures that have shadowed the Big Society undermine religious communities’ role by removing funding, yet introducing more problems.

¹¹⁰ Vanessa Brown *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

¹¹¹ Angela Hughes *Personal Interview* (30/04/2013).

¹¹² Cabinet Office *Online*

¹¹³ *Personal Interview* (30/04/2013).

¹¹⁴ Vanessa Brown *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

The Youth and Younger Community

In the community of Meanwood, residents aged between 0 and 24 constitute thirty per cent of the population.¹¹⁵ It is evident through the numerous activities offered, as well as information gathered from interviews, that the younger generation occupies a particular focus for the religious communities of Meanwood. On the one hand, religious communities attempt to cater for the younger people within their congregation, often endeavouring to keep them engaged in their religion through a revitalisation of the services, or by offering educational classes on the faith itself. On the other hand, there are initiatives offered by religious communities that serve a social purpose, often with a secular basis which appeals to younger people of religious and non- religious backgrounds in order to improve their lives. Although these goals are largely social, the motivation behind them is religious, emphasising the themes of service within the varying religions. For example, the concept of mission is Christianity as 'showing God's love in God's world...It is about serving others, being responsive to local situations and seeing lives changed'.¹¹⁶ Finally, the religious groups in Meanwood often have links with the local schools, assisting the young people of Meanwood in both religious and social ways.

Religious Goals and Initiatives

There is an effort to keep young members of the community interested in attending church, attempting to communicate key teachings within Christianity in an engaging manner.

¹¹⁵ Office for National Statistics *Online*.

¹¹⁶ Churches Together *Online*.

- The Meanwood Valley Baptist Church has recently hired a paid youth and community development worker, Luke Dean;¹¹⁷
- Holy Trinity Church often tailors services to be interactive and lively. For example, a recent service re-enacted the biblical story of David and Goliath;
- Holy Trinity Church baptisms provide an opportunity for the community to come together to celebrate the hopes for the baby's future;
- Following this, the new members of the congregation are invited to the 'Little Mice Group', a group for children and adults to worship and socialise once a month.

It has been noted by several key religious figures that there is a particular age group in the community who, to an extent, 'disappear' from religious life. Academic sources confirm a similar trend; 'it appears to be later in adolescence, as more independence and autonomy is established, that youth are more likely to state they do not believe in God'.¹¹⁸ Reverend Chris Orme of Holy Trinity Church admitted there is difficulty in connecting with teenagers; "some come along to church as kids, then make their own choices and rebel somewhat".¹¹⁹ Mohammed Arif, the Vice Chair of the Iqra Centre, explained that "after sixteen we tend to lose them. They tend to fly away and do their own thing".¹²⁰ He estimated that twenty per cent of those who 'fly away' will return to the Iqra Centre, still having strong attachments. The members of the Iqra Centre have taken an extent of responsibility upon themselves to reduce antisocial behaviour, such as drug use and dealing. They communicate with the young

¹¹⁷ Charles Laxton and Luke Dean *Personal Interview* (15/03/2013).

¹¹⁸ L.D Pearce, J.H. Hardie & E.M. Foster (2013) *A Person-Centered Examination of Adolescent Religiosity Using Latent Class Analysis* (Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 2013) 52 (1), p. 57-79.

¹¹⁹ Chris Orme *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

¹²⁰ Iqra Centre Committee *Personal Interview* (02/03/2013).

Muslims in the area on a personal level, “encouraging them to come in” and “learn about Islam”.¹²¹ By acting upon religiously motivated goals and teaching the youths about their religion, social goals have been accomplished that benefit the wider community.

Luke Dean understands that there “has always been a gap... faith wise”¹²² within the young community, which has consequently enabled a focus on this group. Religious groups are keen to retain the younger generation in their communities, with members such as Chris Orme maintaining; “we need to find ways to make it [religion] more ‘cool’”.¹²³

These hopes are embodied in a wide range of activities. As previously mentioned, educational classes have a large role in explaining and upholding religious beliefs in the younger community.

Activities:

- Meanwood Methodist Church holds a ‘Junior Church’ every Sunday for 8- 16 year olds;
- The Iqra Centre provides Islamic classes for the children and youth ages 5- 16 years old;
- Power Connections host ‘Divas and Gents’ once a month for the 16- 30 age group. During the meeting, games and activities ensue, as well as a discussion of religious issues relevant to the younger generation;
- During the Power Connections services there is crèche available for the younger children;

¹²¹ Iqra Centre Committee *Personal Interview* (02/03/2013).

¹²² Luke Dean *Personal Interview* (15/13/2013).

¹²³ Chris Orme *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

- Uniformed organisations such as the Scouts, Brownies, Guides and Rainbows are often involved with church activity. At Holy Trinity Church, these groups, with the first service of the month devoted to a 'parade service' whereby the organisations rotate the leading responsibility of leading the service.¹²⁴ Although there is a religious basis to these groups, the members can be from non- religious backgrounds.

Social Goals and Initiatives

The religious organisations of Meanwood also promote social goals through varying activities. The most prominent example would be the numerous youth groups that are instigated by religious bodies. Most of the churches researched host their own youth groups. Perhaps the largest of these, however, is held at Stainbeck United Reformed Church on a Monday evening. The group was established and is run by the InterAct organisation, yet there is no religious activity that indicates its Christian origins. Although motivated by a religious initiative, the goals are predominantly social.

Vanessa Brown at InterAct explained that following an increase in the rate of petty crime committed by youths, it was obvious there was need for a group catering to children ages eight to thirteen. An area for specific focus has been the youths from outer estates, such as the Beck Hill estates, an area that has been largely neglected by other organisations.¹²⁵

There are numerous examples of the socially beneficial events available for the young people of Meanwood:

¹²⁴ Chris Orme *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

¹²⁵ Vanessa Brown *Personal Interview* (07/03/2013).

- Meanwood Valley Baptist Church hosts parties for young people, notably the 'winter party' attended by children up to thirteen- many of which were from the adjacent estates;
- Seasonal fairs held in the Methodist Church hall are popular with the younger generation and demonstrate a coming together of the community;
- Annual pantomimes are presented by Stainbeck United Reformed Church which involves children and teenagers in an event for the community;
- The Iqra Centre hosts events available to the young people of Meanwood and their families. For example, an annual barbeque is held at the centre.

These examples demonstrate the wide range of events and activities available for the younger generation in Meanwood, and display how vital religious communities are in meeting their needs. As previously mentioned, religious institutions often provide space for secular organisations. In terms of youth activity, Irish dancing lessons and Karate lessons are offered by secular organisations, but held at the Stainbeck United Reformed Church. It is important to understand that these events are open to all the community, irrespective of religious belief, emphasising that religious communities have a relevant role beyond their congregations.

Involvement with Schools

Schools within Meanwood integrate religious education, as well as having links with the local churches and religious institutions. Furthermore, in various contexts it was noted by local residents and religious figures that the impact of a local good quality

faith school has resulted in increased religious involvement- a nationally recognised tendency.¹²⁶

Schools are particularly crucial in promoting community cohesion, partially through subjects such as religious education.¹²⁷ Links with religious establishments can assist in furthering such cohesion, providing materials and religious assemblies:

- For example, Holy Trinity Church performs weekly assemblies for the Meanwood Church of England Primary School, as well as offering workshops and mock rites of passage such as weddings and funerals;
- St Matthew's Church also offers similar assemblies to St Matthew's Primary School;
- Both churches have members on the governing the school they are in partnership with.

The involvement of both churches with the primary schools provides first- hand religious education for the children, allowing for a greater contribution to a 'pupils' moral, social and cultural development'.¹²⁸ In relation to the goals of religious institutions in terms of this involvement, there are both religious and social aspects to the aims. Although teaching the children about religion, the outcomes the activities are socially beneficially in the development of community cohesion. In a more specifically social initiative, Carr Manor High School has links with the Iqra Centre,

¹²⁶ Joanna Moorhead *What would you do to get your child into a good school?* Online Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2005/apr/13/schooladmissions.schools> [Accessed on: 09/05/2013] (13/04/2005).

¹²⁷ Dinham and Robert p. 295.

¹²⁸ Ofsted *Online- Transforming Religious Education* Available from: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/transforming-religious-education>. [Accessed on: 18/02/2013] p. 47.

referring pupils who are struggling to the centre's volunteer-led maths and English classes.¹²⁹

Conclusion

In Meanwood, there are groups and events aimed specifically at the religious and spiritual well-being of the younger generation in an attempt to keep them engaged with the faith. Yet, in addition to these services, there is also a wide range of secular activities open to all the younger people in the area. Members of the religious establishments understand the need to maintain links and support for the younger community as “interaction with young people is very important”.¹³⁰ The above activities rely on paid workers as well as volunteers, if not solely. Many of these initiatives precede the Big Society; religious communities have been catering for young people (and others) in the community since the New Labour government and before. Although under different motivations, the New Labour government also wanted to ‘capitalise on the social capital of religious groups’¹³¹ in order to achieve a ‘better’, cohesive community. Yet, our research shows that cohesion between the younger and older generations, differing religious traditions and differing socio-economic backgrounds, have always been a focus for religious groups in Meanwood notwithstanding varying government incentives.

Religion in an ‘Age of Austerity’ and Big Society: A Case Study of Meanwood

A case study of religion during an ‘age of austerity’ and Big Society in Meanwood has revealed the power of religious bodies in the community. Despite being a small area, once we looked beneath the surface we found that Meanwood was teeming

¹²⁹ Iqra Centre Committee *Personal Interview* (02/03/2013).

¹³⁰ Luke Dean *Personal Interview* (15/13/2013).

¹³¹ Melanie Prideaux p. 81.

with religious activity. In relation to the aims of the Big Society, religious organisations and initiatives such as InterAct prove to be forerunners and prototypes for building a community that meets the needs of its social groups, whether they are young, old or struggling financially. In a time where community cohesion and positive relations between faiths have never been more relevant, partnerships such as 'Knit and Natter' embody a pivotal role. In regards as to whether the Big Society has helped the religious organisations of Meanwood, it would seem that in their on-going community contributions the people of the various religious denominations in Meanwood are inspired by their faith rather than government policy. The Big Society has not served to be particularly innovative or motivating for religious groups in Meanwood, with most being active before the strategy was established. Even groups that do not have such a felt present in Meanwood, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, still have an important role during this time of austerity due to the fact they provide substantial support for their own members, as well as funding themselves through donations like many of the other groups we have encountered.

In a critical assessment of our research, it can be asserted that the effect of the Big Society on the religious communities within Meanwood has been insignificant, with the 'age of austerity' creating obstacles. As a result of budget cuts for community activities in recent times, religious organisations have seen a surge of problems faced by the residents in their community, with a growing responsibility to attempt to solve them. There has been no hint by the religious figures and members that we have spoken to that they do not want to help those struggling in the 'age of austerity'. Rather, the cuts and lack of funding in areas which would normally be in the domain of the council have meant that voluntary organisations, like the religious ones presented, are expected to fill this gap without the means or resources to be able to

do so. However, as we have seen, this does not mean that they will not try; the motivation that these individuals' faith gives them has enabled congregations to work together, build links with other denominations and religions, and contribute valuable services to individuals, the local Meanwood community, and beyond. We hope that this report brings awareness to the commendable and numerous projects that the religious communities of Meanwood provide, as well as an accurate and unique insight to the necessity of religion in regards to welfare during an age of austerity and Big Society. By bringing together the many tendrils of work that religious communities of Meanwood deliver into this report, such an impressive cohort may even inspire others communities of both religious and non- religious backgrounds.

Word count: 10, 954

A Directory of Meanwood

Below is a directory of Meanwood comprising of: places of worship; places of religious significance; schools and prominent community buildings and groups. All information presented in this directory has been either been taken from churches/organisations websites and/or interviews with community members. Group members have taken all photographs in this directory.

Christian Churches

Apostolic African Church (conducts services at Stainbeck URC)

Stainbeck Road
Meanwood
Leeds
LS7 2PP

Denomination: Apostolic

Weekly Services and/or Events: Each Saturday the church offers a weekly service, this begins at 11:00 and ends approximately at 15:00.

Demographic: On observation, the church primarily drew women and children into its congregation.

Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses

Stainbeck Road
Leeds

Denomination: Jehovah's Witnesses

Contact: Mr James Pickford

Contact (Telephone): 0113-269-5163

Weekly Services and/or Events: Each Sunday the church offers a gathering for Meanwood Jehovah's Witness congregation, commencing at 10:15.





Holy Trinity Church

Church Lane
Meanwood
Leeds
LS6 4NP

Denomination: Church of England

Vicar: Christopher Orme

Aim: *'to worship God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit'*

Contact (Telephone): 0113-2757-885

Contact (Email): office@holytrinitymeanwood.org.uk/office@holytrinitymeanwood.org.uk

Website: <http://www.holytrinitymeanwood.org.uk/>

Weekly Services and/or Events: Each Sunday the church offers congregation worship, holding three services throughout the morning: 08:30, 10:00 and 11:30. Each service caters for the diverse Parish, offering worship in distinctively different format. Additionally, the church hosts *KidzChurch* for children within the Parish. With a full social calendar, the church (primarily in its hall) offers various events for the whole community throughout the week. These range from choir to youth groups to coffee mornings.

Demographic: On observation, the church had large demographic hosting services for all members of the community.



Meanwood Valley Baptist Church (Currently housed in the Community Centre)

Meanwood Community Centre
Stainbeck Avenue
Meanwood
Leeds
LS7 2QU

Denomination: Baptist

Deacons: Deborah Baboolal and Paul Harrison (plus, three elders)

Aim: *"introduce people to the love of Jesus Christ; equip them with a faith that works in real life and give them the tools to duplicate this development in others".*

Contact (Telephone): 0113-275-7251

Contact (Email): info@mvbc.org.uk

Website: <http://www.mvbc.org.uk/>

Weekly Services and/or Events: Each Sunday, 10:30-11:45 the church offers worship, this is offered on a rotation, with each Sunday's service discussing a different theme: 1st Sunday– sharing, communion and lunch, 2nd Sunday - bible study, 3rd Sunday – Sermon and 4th Sunday- all age worship. The church also in addition to running weekly church services holds a Youth Group on a Monday evening.



Meanwood Methodist Church

Monkbridge Road
Meanwood
Leeds
LS6 4HH

Denomination: Methodist

Reverend: Rupert Weekes

Aim: 'social holiness': 'to meet and worship with other Christians in order to grow in the Christian life and to understand what God's will is for us, and for our community'.

Contact (Telephone): 0113-274-2998

Contact (Email): meanwoodminister@leedshwmethodistcircuit.org.uk

Website: <http://www.leedshwmethodistcircuit.org.uk/meanwood.html>

Weekly Services and/or Events: Worship is held at the church on Sunday's: 08:30, 10:30 and 18:30. Additionally, the church uses its hall to host various events throughout the week, these include: Mother and Toddler groups, dance groups, Bible Study and a Senior Citizens lunch.

Demographic: The church self acknowledges its congregation is comprised of members aged 50 and above.



Redeemed Christian Church of God (Power Connections)

Meanwood Road
Leeds
LS7 2AH

Denomination: Charismatic Christianity

Pastor: Ralph Ibiyeye

Contact (Telephone): 07985133702 or 079473848300

Weekly Services and/or Events: Services are hosted on Sunday's, 10:30-12:00. The Church also runs a Sunday school, 10:00-10:30.



Stainbeck United Reform Church

Stainbeck Road

Meanwood

Leeds

LS7 2PP

Denomination: United Reform

Reverend: Angela Hughes

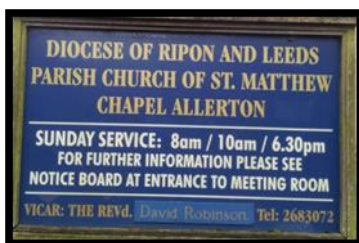
Aim: "Together, making a difference for Christ's sake."

Contact (Telephone): 0113-237-0251

Contact (Email): hughesa@ntlworld.com

Website: <http://www.leedshwmethodistcircuit.org.uk/meanwood.html>

Weekly Services and/or Events: The church holds three services per week: Thursday's, 19:30 and Sunday's, 10:45. Again, as with other Meanwood Churches Stainbeck's Hall plays host too many events throughout the week and because of its Reform foundations, many of these events are at the forefront of ecumenicalism with Meanwood. Events include lunches for the elderly, community café, employment projects and a youth club.



St Matthew's Church

Wood Lane

Chapel Allerton

Leeds

LS7 3QF

Denomination: Anglican

Vicar: David Robinson

Contact (Telephone): 0113-268-3072

Website: <http://www.stmatthewschapelallerton.org.uk/index.html>

Weekly Services and/or Events: A weekly service is offered on Sunday, 08:00, 10:00 and 18:30. There also a number of different events run in conjunction with the church: Youth groups, Crèche, Women's groups and Fellowships. The church is also heavily involved in the InterAct project – hence its inclusion within this project.



St Urban's Catholic Church

2 Moor Park Drive

Leeds

LS6 4BX

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Priest: Father Michael Krychiwskyj

Contact (Telephone): 0113-259-751

Contact Email: krickers@ntlworld.com

Website: <http://www.jeannejuganleeds.org.uk/StUrbans>

Weekly Services and/or Events: Mass is held on Sunday at 10:30 and 18:30. Children are also catered for with the church holding a 10:30, Children's Liturgy. Additional events include Confession and a Russian Orthodox Liturgy, every second Saturday of the month at 10:00.

Demographic: On observation, the congregation were primarily elderly (50+) with a large amount of families with young children. In the majority the congregation was of white ethnic origin but there were also members of an Afro-Caribbean and Asian descent.

Other Religions Institutions: Islam and Buddhism



DharmaMind Buddhist Group

The Yoga Space

Chapel House

378 Meanwood Road

Meanwood

Leeds

LS7 2JF

Buddhist Group: Western Mahayana

Group Leader: Aloka David Smith

Aim: "offers a path to stillness and a means to rediscover freedom in our lives".

Contact: Matthew or Tom

Contact (Telephone): 07989282215 or 07702565336

Contact (Email): team@dharmamind.net

Website: <http://www.dharmamind.net/localgroups/leeds.htm>

Weekly Services and/or Events: The group caters for both those new and experienced in Buddhist meditation. Beginners Meditation is held, Tuesday: 19:00-20:00 and Advanced, Thursday: 19:00-21:00.

Iqra Centre

4-6 Carr Manor Crescent
Moortown
Leeds
LS17 5DH

Contact: N/A

Contact (Telephone): 0113-216-9347

Contact (Email): admin@iqracentre.org.uk

Website: <http://www.iqracentre.org.uk/>

Purpose: The Iqra Centre forms part of the UK Islamic Mission, which in 1962 a group of Muslims founded to 'conveying the truth of Islam to Westerners'. The centre also provides an Islamic education to Muslim children.



Local Schools: Primary



Carr Manor Primary School

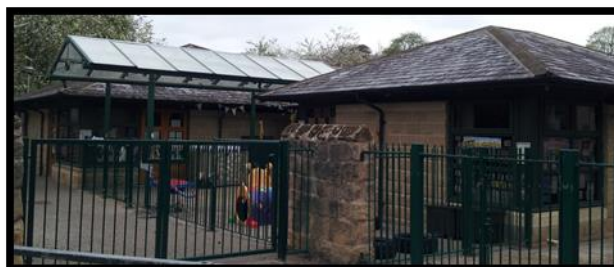
Carr Manor Road
Leeds
LS17 5DJ

Headteacher: Mrs. H Sanderson

Contact (Telephone): 0113-268-9160

Contact (Email): info@carrmanor-pri.leeds.sch.uk

Website: <http://www.carrmanor-pri.leeds.sch.uk>



Meanwood Church of England Primary School

Green Road
Meanwood
Leeds
LS6 4LD

Headteacher: Mrs. H Sanderson

Contact (Telephone): 0113-275-5883

Contact (Email): sanderhi01@leedslearning.net

Website: <http://www.meanwoodschool.co.uk/>



St Urban's Catholic Primary School

Grove Road

Leeds

LS6 4QD

Headteacher: Mrs. T McStay

Contact (Telephone): 0113-293-4477

Contact (Email): info@st-urbans.leeds.sch.uk

Website: <http://www.sturbans.co.uk>

Local Schools: Secondary



Carr Manor Community High School

Carr Manor Road

Leeds

LS17 5DJ

Headteacher: Mr. S Flowers

Contact (Telephone): 0113-336-8400

Contact (Email): info@carrmanor.org.uk

Website: <http://www.carrmanorhighschool.co.uk>



Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School

Tongue Lane

Leeds

LS6 4QE

Headteacher: Miss E Cox

Contact (Telephone): 0113-336-8800

Contact (Email): info@cardinalheenan.leeds.sch.uk

Website: <http://www.carrmanorhighschool.co.uk>

Additional Places of Interest



Acorn Christian Bookshop

1 Monkbridge Road
Headinley
Leeds
LS6 4DX

Contact: Gordon or Clare Robertson

Contact (Telephone): 0113-275-8233

Contact (Email): gordonandclare@googlemail.com

Website: N/A

Description: An independent Christian Bookshop on the outskirts of Meanwood.



The Meanwood Institute

235 Otley Road
Leeds
LS16 5QL

Contact: Mr Brynley Evans

Contact (Telephone): 0113-275-5978

Contact (Email): bj.evans2@ntlworld.com

Purpose: To provide a space for the community for recreational and celebratory events. **Events:** The institute holds a quarterly senior citizen event and afternoon tea.



Meanwood Community Centre

Stainbeck Avenue
Meanwood
Leeds
LS7 2QU

Contact (Telephone): 0113-274-1622

Purpose: In addition to housing the Meanwood Valley Baptist Church, the centre provides a space for community events and projects- for example, various employment clinics and meetings with area's MP.



Northside Retail Park

Stonegate Road
Meanwood
Leeds
LS7 2TT

Description: Provides a place for Meanwood residences and others to shop, stores vary in products and markets.

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