

HISTORY
OF
METHODISM
IN
SHELFIELD



In times of change, it is necessary to ensure that our past history is not lost, therefore this booklet attempts to record the history of Methodism in Sheffield.

We would be greatly indebted to anyone who can add to, or correct, any statement or dates made in this short history.

The sketch map will give the reader some idea of when and where it all started.

There are four main episodes in our history:

1. Early meeting places, approximately 1765-1864.
2. The first Chapel, 1864-1906/7.
3. The present Chapel, 1907 to present day.
4. The Mission Tent, 1916.

Part 1. Where it all began?

So far, it is impossible to give a definite date or place. In the year 1740 AD, John Wesley was mobbed in Walsall. Twenty years later he was to exclaim Walsall has changed, how has God either tamed the wild beasts or chained them up!

From the above statement or exclamation we may assume that Methodism had taken root in the Walsall area about 1760. It is possible that Methodism which we now enjoy in Sheffield began about that time.

One of the first meeting places in Sheffield was a Farm House in Spring Road (the site now occupied by a block of flats – see map).

It is said that there were also house to house meetings.

The Farm House, however seems to have been the first definite meeting place for Methodism in Sheffield.

In the Farm House and in their homes, our forefathers laid the foundations for the first Methodist Chapel which was opened in the year 1864/5 and so we may say that this was Methodism in Sheffield from approximately 1760-1864.

The first Chapel

The building which was known to most of us as the Sunday School, was opened for public worship in the year 1864 AD and was so used and for other ancillary

services for 43 years (1864-1907). No specific details of the life and work of the Church during those 43 years can be given as no minutes book of either Leaders or Trustees meetings are to be found. The oldest records are a Baptismal Register 1864-1932 and a Collection Journal 1901-1910. The oldest Primitive record, a Roll Book dated 1874. In 1874 the Lichfield Primitive Circuit allocated funds to the Shelfield Primitives towards the building of a Church, the Church eventually being built and opened but not until 1906, when their Trust Minute records commence.

Baptismal Register

The number of Marriages or Funeral services held during the 43 years is not known but it is interesting to note that between 1864-1907 there are 244 recorded baptisms.

The first baptism record (no date is given) shows that the child was brought from Wednesbury to Shelfield, rather a long journey in those days, travelling not being what it is today. The second baptism was from Willenhall (no date given).

The third recorded baptism gives a specific date, 22nd September 1870. From this date onwards, specific dates are given and often the birth date is also given. The baptisms after the last mentioned date were from Shelfield or the surrounding villages, e.g. Rushall and Walsall Wood. The last recorded baptism in this era was 17th March 1907.

From 1907 until October 3rd 1971 there were 351 Baptisms. The Baptismal Register in some cases contains Baptisms of three generations of children. Unfortunately records have been lost for a period after this date due to a theft of the church safe.

The Collection Journal

The first entry is the 21st April 1901. Morning Preacher Mr. Bass, the collection 1 shilling and 5 pence. The

evening preacher was Mr. Smith, collection 7 shillings and 3 pence. Total for the day 8 shillings and 8 pence. Only on special occasions did the collection exceed 1 pound.

The last entry in the journal concerning this era is 20th April 1907. The journals show that in 1903 extensions were added to the rear of the Chapel. What these extensions were is not clear. The Preachers Vestry was adjacent to the door of the Chapel, the Preachers and Society Stewards having to brave the elements of the weather to gain entrance to the Chapel. It is possible that the Preacher's Vestry was joined to the Chapel by a passageway between the two buildings. No services were held for four weeks whilst the building was completed. The Chapel was closed from 15th February 1903 and opened on 8th March 1903. Three Services were held that day: Morning Preacher Mr S. Ball collection 4 pounds 9 shillings; Afternoon Preacher Mr. Sheldon collection 4 pounds 14 shillings 5 pence; Evening Preacher Rev S G Pickard, collection 4 pounds 7 shillings 1 penny;

Total Collection 13 pounds 10 shillings 6 pence.

We can only imagine the enthusiasm of our forefathers as they sought to establish Methodism in those early days. The membership must have been very active to require extensions to the church in 1903 and to build a new church three years later.

This era ended with the laying of the foundation stone for our present Chapel in 1906. The last services were held 20th April 1907; Morning Preacher Mr. Corby , collection 3 shillings 3 and half pence.

Evening Preacher Mr. W. Orgill, collection 12 shillings 8 and a half pence. Total Collection, 16 shillings

So ended the first 43 years of established Methodism in Sheffield. **The Present Chapel**

The foundations of the present Chapel were laid down in 1906 AD.

The foundation stones were laid at a special service on Thursday, 8th November 1906. Mr. Reg Evans had a hymn book which was presented to his mother (Roy Evans' Grandmother) on this occasion. On the fly leaf of the hymn book are these words, 'Laying of the Memorial Stones, Thursday 8th November 1906'. Thanks to the Evans family for this historical record.

The Chapel was opened for public worship on Sunday 28th April 1907. The cost including the purchase of the land was £1,033.

Funds had been raised by members and the final sum of £275 was loaned interest free by Mr Bursey. To be repaid when friends could pay. The opening services, morning and evening were conducted by the Rev. Burrows, with a musical service in the afternoon. The next three Sunday services followed the same pattern of worship. From 26th May onwards, the services settled down to usual morning and evening services and so naturally the specials and anniversary services began to take place. For many years though, such was the enthusiasm of our forefathers there was a Bible Class on Sunday afternoon from 3 p.m. until 4 p.m. These services were led by

Church members

This report was published in December 1906.

The memorial stones in connection with the new Wesleyan Chapel were laid the other week in the presence of a large number of people, who had gathered in spite of the inclement weather. The first part of the proceedings, in consequence of the rain, was held in the old chapel, the Rev J Johns presiding over a crowded audience. After the proceedings had been opened in the usual way, the Rev J Johns said he wished to extend a hearty welcome to all who were present on an occasion

which would be historic in the History of Methodism in Sheffield. For many years their church had been crowded to the doors, but the new premises would accommodate between 300 and 350 people.

The Rev Silvester Whitehead said they were living in a materialistic age, but this new sanctuary would be a testimony to the supernatural. The heaven-pointing spires in the towns and villages were silent but eloquent testimonies to the Divine Spirit, and reminded them that they were on God's earth and in a Christian land. They had good reason to rejoice that day because this would represent the power by which alone fallen men could be raised. They could never remove the miseries of the world by legislation or any such means, because vice would remain; education without religion could only improve the mind without eradicating evil, and the gospel was the only cure.

Centenary Chapel

A meeting was held at the home of Mr Johnson and was presided over by the Rev W H Taylor and it was resolved to purchase a piece of land from Mrs Barnett at a cost of one shilling and six pence per square yard. A total cost of £67 10 shillings. The cost of building the church was £412. The stone laying was early October 1906.

Anniversaries and Special Occasions

1. Chapel Anniversaries were always held on the last Sunday in April.
2. The Sunday School Anniversaries, third and fourth Sunday in June.
3. Harvest Festival, the last Sunday in September.
4. Choir Sunday seemed to have been held on various dates until the 15th December 1912, when the Messiah was first performed and was rendered on that Sunday every year although now sadly we do not have a choir to carry on with that tradition. The Choir Sunday was

therefore always the second Sunday in December. It was certainly the case that Shelfield Wesley Choir played a vital part in Worship in Methodism in Shelfield and beyond. Ladies days and men's efforts seemed to have been on various dates until the 1970's when the dates seemed to settle as Ladies Day the third Sunday in July and Men's Day the second Sunday in February. These dates were historical and traditional. In celebrating them, thanks was given to God for the goodly heritage given by our forefathers. Sadly we do not still follow in their train but we must pray that we see a revival so that we can leave as great a Heritage as they.

The Mission Tent

The next important milestone was the Mission Tent, this was from 19th March to 18th April 1916, of which more later.

Several Evangelical Campaigns have taken place in Shelfield from that date. In the early thirties a campaign was led by Miss Holmes and Miss Stevens. Mr. W. Orgill Jnr, also organised two successful campaigns in 1962 and 1969.

1921 and Onwards

On 23rd August 1921 the Shelfield Primitive Sunday School Anniversary was held in the Shelfield Wesley Chapel. Another interesting thing is that Collection Journal 1922-33 is the same at the back of the Journal—it is also upside down. The Journal tells us that it was customary for one Sunday's collection to be given to the local hospital. This was known as Hospital Sunday. The first record is 28th October 1923.

In 1925 the steel rods which now run across the Chapel were put in, in order to strengthen the walls, to relieve the stress of the roof on the main walls. of the chapel.

Two of the chapel members Bill Penn and Reg Evans helped install these rods.

The first Electric Lights were installed in the Chapel in 1932. Members were asked to donate £1 for the lights. These were replaced by the present lighting system in 1969.

The stained glass windows at the rear of the choir stalls, now hidden by the organ, were given by an anonymous donor. The stained glass window 'I am the true vine' was originally in the centre of the choir stall but is now featured in the new extension.

The original benches, the style of these can be seen in the choir stalls today were replaced by 150 wooden chairs most of which were donated by chapel members and were dedicated by Rev J W Clarke in 1971. These were later replaced by the 120 chairs which are in the church today.

The War Memorial

The War Memorial 1939-45 which stands outside the Chapel was erected after a village subscription an all denomination effort. It was dedicated in November 1947 by the Rev E J Turner. The memorial bears the names of the fallen from our village. Many of the names on the memorial were young men who had passed through our Sunday School and were active members of the Chapel. The original memorial fell into disrepair and was replaced by the present stone in the 1990's.

Memorial Dedications

The Bible and Hymn Book in the pulpit which were in use prior the present Hymns and Psalms being published were dedicated on the afternoon of November 18th 1950, in memory of Mr William Orgill and Mr William Bates, the Music Stand was given by the family of Mr William Bates, this was also dedicated at the service. Sometime later a piano was purchased and dedicated and this bares

a memorial tablet to members who served our beloved chapel so well. It was decided that in future a memorial book be purchased and the names of all Chapel Members be written in this book as they pass to higher service. The book was purchased but sadly to date it has not been used.

The Jubilee Year

The Jubilee year of our present Chapel was celebrated on Saturday 21st April 1956. The Chapel was re-opened at this time as well after renovation. The re-dedication services were conducted by the Rev Brazier Green MA., who had served some years previous as a probationary minister in the circuit. The afternoon service was followed by tea in the schoolroom. The Rev Brazier Green was also the principal speaker at the evening service after the tea. The preacher morning and evening on Sunday 22nd April was Alderman Lewis Davies OBE.

The Organs

As already mentioned the first organ was installed in 1911-12 and was in constant use until 1958 when it was replaced by an electronic organ. This organ was dedicated in 1958 by the Rev Hayden Morris. The organ soloist was Mr J Dorrell with other musical items under the baton of Mr Deryck Langford, organist Mr J Mulhill. The present organ was installed in 1980 and funds were raised by special efforts and regular donations from members.

Missions Mission Tent 1916

The Gospel Mission as it was called in the Collection Journal 1911-1916 was from 19th March to 22nd April 1916. The campaign was led by Mr F Elliott. He was accompanied on this mission by his wife and young child.

The Gospel Mission began on the Sunday morning of 19th March. Mr Elliott conducted the morning and evening services in the chapel. He also conducted the morning and evening services for the next three weeks. The Sunday services of the 16th April were conducted in the morning by Mr Parker and the evening service by the Rev J C Stanfield. The Campaign ended on the Sunday evening of 22nd

April. The weeknight services took place in the Mission Tent, the principal speaker being Mr F Elliott assisted by various members of the chapel. There is no definite knowledge of the order of the services. However it is known that choruses from the Alexander Hymn Book were sung and possibly other well known chorus hymn books. At one point in the service there was an appeal for converts which met with reasonable response.

The mission services were attended by people from the outlying area of the district. One person came from as far as Friezland Lane Brownhills. This person was not a professing Christian but from information given, was one of many who came, to quote, —After this first meeting I attended everyone until the endll.

Mr Elliott, his wife and son lodged with Mr & Mrs W Bampton Snr at High Heath. It understood that they were also hospitably entertained by Mr & Mrs W Bates Snr and other members and friends of the chapel during their month's stay in Shelfield.

And so the Gospel Mission ended on the Sunday evening of 22nd April 1916. We can only imagine what a night it must have been! Did they sing Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow? Do we still reap the fruits of the seeds sown during that mission? Are we treading where the saints have trod?

Let us remember this mission was held when Great Britain was at war with Germany 1914-18. Great was the faith of our forefathers that in peace and war they had

time for God. Surely they were able to sing ‘In War My Peace, In Loss My Gain’

The Mission Caravan 1935

The Mission Caravan Campaign as it was known took place in the year 1935. There are no records of this campaign so there are no definite dates. The campaign was led by Miss Holms and Miss Stevens. Miss Stevens was later to go as a missionary to China. The campaign lasted about two weeks.

The campaign services were held every weeknight during the fortnight but not on Sunday. The Sunday services were conducted by the planned preacher. The weeknight services began with a service for the children at which they sang choruses. This was followed by a service for adults and ended with a challenge for converts. The campaigners slept in a caravan which was parked in the Chapel grounds. However they relied on upon various chapel members and friends for hospitality as this was their sole means of support. Miss Holms and Miss Stevens held evangelistic campaigns at various chapels in the Walsall Circuit which Shelfield Wesley was part of at that time. Mr John Seedhouse (a member of Walsall Wood Wesley Chapel) loaned them his horses to haul the caravan to the various Chapel’s in the circuit. Mr Seedhouse of Vigo Farm Walsall Wood was a miner who used to help his brother run the farm in his spare time. It is difficult to assess the success of this campaign but it is true to say that no evangelical campaign is held without a certain amount of success. If not then why is it remembered in the history of the chapel. Some of the older members can still remember Miss Holms preaching at Sunday School Anniversaries.

Cliffe College Campaign 1962

This campaign was held at Shelfield Wesley and those responsible were William Orgill Jr., Michael Newell,

and John Williams (Now Rev John Williams). A organising committee was also formed. It lasted for three weeks and was conducted by Alex Passmore and Norman Smith. The weeknight services for children were followed by services for adults. The Sunday services were also conducted by the evangelists. Again this campaign was well attended by the local residents, surrounding villages and supported by the chapels within the circuit.

Ambassador for Christ Campaign 1969

This campaign took place in the Autumn of 1969 and lasted for two weeks. The leaders were Don Pepper, Fraser Harding and Trevor Jones. Again William Orgill Jnr played an important part in the organisation of the campaign.

The children's services which were held before the adult services were known as sunshine corner.

Many may still remember that the Sunday School was known during the campaign as the Net. The young people of the chapel were there to talk to and offer help to other young people who wanted to know about Christ and how they could be led to him. Quite a number of converts were won for Jesus Christ during this campaign.

Local Preachers

Sheffield Wesley has prided itself on the number of local preachers it has produced although surprisingly only one minister. The Rev John Williams a Minister in the Methodist Free Church.

Local Preachers from this church

William Cross to 1937	Peter Walker 1970
Benjamin Lawley to 1934 1928	Alfred Boucher
William Orgill from 1892	Reg Evans 1933

Harry Marklew 1933-70	Michael Newell
1964Mrs E	
Nutting	John Williams
John Doody 1953	Robert Couchman
1979	
Michael Smith 1958	Alan Reeves 1980
Jean Ball 1997	Rex Walker

Auxiliaries William Dolman, Jonah Ball, James Nutting, Arthur Langford, William Orgill Jnr. Peter Caulton.

Wesley Organists	Choirmasters
James Bullen	Willaim Bates
Stanley Langford Snr	Mrs Nutting
Ernest Orgill	Sam Smith
Deryck Langford	William Lawley
William Carless	JohnLawley
John Allen	
Leon Allen	
John Lawley	

Wesley Trust Secretaries

William Bates	William Orgill Snr	William Lawley
John Allen	Harry Shaw	Reg Evans

Wesley Society Stewards

William Bates	John Sommerfield	William Penn Snr
Mrs Spekes	Reg Evans	William Orgill
Benjamin Spekes	William Penn Jnr	Len Paskin
Eric Moseley	Ken Hargreaves	Shirley Byrne
Margaret Oakden	Neville Taylor	Jessie Barrett
Doris Bevington	Charles Moseley	Cliff May
William Lawley	David Price	Margaret
Jones		

Ministers who have served the Shelfield Churches

Rev Condor Nattress (1907)	Rev William James (1907)
Rev Joseph Johns (1907)	Rev E Rutter
Rev E Evans	Rev H J Rigby
Rev E A Robin	Rev Harry Burrows
Rev E Brown	Rev F Bateman
Rev A Ward	Rev A Merrick (1925)
Rev Brazier Green MA (1926)	Rev J TributRev Richardson
Rev Grevill Lewis	
Rev Lysonbury (1920)	Rev Thomas (1933)
Rev Clifford Caddy (1935)	Rev C Gould (1936-41)
Rev Picken (1939)	Rev Chris Tice (1943-49)
Rev C Hawkins (1943)	Rev J Moorhouse (1942-47)
Rev E Tamer BD (1948-53)	Rev E J Turner
Rev F Neville HCF (1949-52)	Rev T S Low (1957-62)
Rev H Morris (1957-62)	Rev E Damson (1957-61)
Rev W Dickenson (1961-65)	Rev Barker (1962-67)
Rev W Hill MSc NCH (1965-69)	Rev W Clarke (1967)
Rev N Morton (1969)	Rev E Haughton
Rev G Wilkinson (1982-90)	Rev Burns (1988-90)
Rev Hicks (1977-88)	Rev E Woolley (1990-96)
Rev D Allan (1990-98)	Rev R Goode (1996– 2003)
Rev H Cade (1999-2004)	Rev J Edwards Bertrand (1998)
Rev A Hardwick	Rev D Taylor

Supernumerary Rev Lawrence Robinson

Sunday School

Shelfield Wesley always had a strong Sunday School and were renowned for having a good Sunday School Anniversary when it was traditional for everyone to wear white. The Sunday Schools outings were days to be

remembered usually quite local to places like Wicksteed Park, Trentham Gardens, Drayton Manor Park, Milford, Stourport. In the 1960's the trips went a little further a field visiting Rhyl and Southport. In the 1940's and early 50's Mrs Nutting used to put on plays with Sunday School children playing a prominent part.

Sunday School Superintendents Primary and Senior
Reg Evans, Mirry Doody, Dorie Orgill, William
Orgill, Deryck
Langford, Myra Bowyer, Jessie Barrett, Doris Penn
(Ceney)

Uniting of Churches

In 1988 the members of Wesley and Centenary Methodist Church's decided that they should unite and worship at Wesley and now known as Shelfield Methodist Church. The final service at Centenary was held on Sunday evening 11th December 1989. The service was very well attended with over 90 people attending and was enjoyed by all. Not that one could speak for youngest just 4 weeks old and he slept throughout the evening.

Since the unity the old chapel which was known as the Schoolroom was demolished in 1994 and a new extension to the Chapel building erected giving more modern conveniences.

Use of the church today.

Today Shelfield Male Voice Choir use the premises on Monday evening for rehearsal and the Ladies Class meets fortnightly on a Monday evening. The Brownies meet on Wednesday evening and there is a craft class in morning. Church services are held at 10.30 a.m. and 6.00 p.m on Sundays.

Memories

My memories of the early church in Shelfield go back to the 1940's when the old stalwarts of the church were Mr William Orgill Senior, Mr and Mrs Speke, Mr and Mrs W Bates, Mr A Boucher Mr and Mrs Nutting and Mr Summerfield. Mr Orgill was always at the front of the church and if he thought the preacher had gone on long enough in his sermon or prayer he would shout out Amen repeatedly yet he always preached long sermons and prayers himself. Mr Bates was an early choirmaster and Sunday School secretary. Mr Boucher was always the handyman carrying out the gardening at the chapel and he was very proud of the lawn at the rear of the church which in the early days was used for lawn tennis and bowling. Mrs Nutting was choir mistress and she also produced plays in the Sunday School building which were very popular and Mr Nutting was deputy Sunday School Superintendent. I have memories of the three elderly ladies, Mrs Goode, Mrs Owen and Mrs Bates who used to sit at the front of the church and two of them were deaf. They would sit quietly during the sermon and when the preacher announced the last hymn Mrs Goode would say rather loudly what did he say. The next generation were really active at a time when the church was thriving. In the late 1950's and early 1960's a congregation of 90 to 100 was not uncommon on a Sunday evening including the choir which used to number 30. The 5 real stalwarts were Reg Evans, Len Paskin, Bill Penn Bill Lawley and Bill Boucher. They carried out all the maintenance on the church and were active in all departments. Reg was Trust secretary, Leaders secretary, Society Steward, Property Steward, and Sunday School Superintendent. Len was a Trustee, Leader, Property Steward, Society Steward and Sunday School Secretary.

Bill Penn and Bill Boucher were also Trustees and leaders and all four men combined their talents of Bricklayer, Plasterer and

carpenters to keep the church building in good repair. All four men were devoted Christians and all four used their voices to proclaim the gospel in song. This era was also very memorable for the success of the Sunday School with numbers around 70. Every Sunday morning the primary section of the Sunday School would sit in the centre of the church and would leave before the sermon and the older ones would sit with the boys on the right and the girls on the left. If any of the older ones wanted to leave at the same time as the primary they would have to bring a note from their parents. Bill Lawley was an active trustee and conductor of the choir and of course conducted many successful Sunday School Anniversaries. John Lawley the current church organist succeeded Bill as choirmaster. Bill Lawley used to organise concert parties to appear in the old Sunday Schoolroom just after the second world war and these were very well received. Many of the Wesley Sunday School used to help in the Sunday School anniversaries at Centenary. Deryck Langford, his wife Irene and Bill Orgill were Sunday School Superintendents following on from Reg Evans and in later years Myra Bowyer after the uniting of Wesley and Centenary. Although the Sunday School numbers have decreased you can still see evidence of our forefathers with Charlotte granddaughter of John Lawley, Rachel and Matthew Greatgrandchildren of Bill Lawley and Daniel and Elise Great-grandchildren of Reg Evans. There is evidence of the social side of the church, which so active 50 years ago, being revived as we embark on our Centenary celebrations as we have a number of events planned throughout the year.