

Walton Methodist Church



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church



Inside the renovated

Carol and I were both members of Walton Methodist Church, which is situated on Shay Lane in the village, but we have now moved to Hemsworth as it is much nearer our home.

Whilst there we celebrated the Church's 100th Birthday and the history below was written based on a 50 year history updated. It appears nowhere else on the web and may be of interest.

Before 1849

Exactly when the first Methodist Society was formed in Walton is not known, but from records available we do know that it had existed before 1849. "Several and various had been the meeting-places, hallowed into Sanctuaries" according to the report written for the Jubilee and referring to the early days before 1849.

For some time the Society had met for worship in a two storied building in the Balk, which stood where the bungalow "West Lodge" now stands. It is recorded that owing to the growth of the Society the first floor of the building was taken out to give better accommodation. The building was used during the week as a school by Mr Athey, who led the singing of the congregation on Sundays with an accordian.

However respectable a village Walton may appear in the present century, it has been heard spoken of as a "wicked little place" in the last century. The Township is in the ecclesiastical Parish of Sandal Magna, but there having been no church in the village of any denomination since the Reformation it is not surprising that Walton's reputation was not high. One can, therefore, well imagine the great need for a religious awakening and

that Methodism came to answer that need, as it had done in so many other villages and towns throughout the land.

In the early part of the nineteenth century Walton was touched for a short time by the Industrial Revolution. Soapworks were built in Shay Lane near the canal and many of the workers joined the Methodist Society.

1849 to 1896

In 1849 the building in the Balk was required for other purposes and the Town's School, now demolished, consisting of two rooms and situated between Walton House and Walton Grange, was adopted as the meeting-house.

Unlike the early days of many non-conformist societies the Walton Methodists suffered no serious persecution of a violent nature, but we are told that mischievous youths, on occasions, mounted the roof of the Town School and placed obstructions on the chimney, filling the building with smoke and causing a hasty dispersal of the worshippers.

During the period that the Town's School was used for worship the great Reform Movement shook Wesleyan Methodism, and for many weeks neither Wesleyans nor Reformers came to take the services. Eventually it was the Reformers who came along and the Walton Society became identified with that body.

It was also during that period that owing to opposition by Squire Waterton, the soapworks were removed to Thornes and the Society suffered a loss of members and workers.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, there was a strong desire and determination to build a House of God in the village, and as the result of great sacrifice and untiring devotion on the part of a handful of workers, a piece of land was rented and a chapel built which was opened in August 1856, at a cost of £150. The opening of the chapel must be regarded as a great step in the social development of the village as this was the first building to be erected by the efforts of ordinary people and at a time when men counted their weekly wages in shillings and not pounds.



Original Chapel - Built 1856

The Pioneers

One of the most generous supporters of this venture was Mr Edward Simpson, the great grandfather of the present Mr Edward Simpson of Thornhill House, and one of the leading workers was that gentleman's sister, Miss Simpson.

Four other names are recorded as being pioneers of the building of the original chapel; Robert Crossland, George Steele, Sam Scolah and David Denton.

David Denton (senior)

Very few in the village today will have heard of the first three names, let alone remember them in person, but Mr David Denton was privileged to serve the church with unstinting loyalty, love and devotion for over seventy years, living actively to ripe old age of 91 years.

He was a man of slender build, but amazing vitality, whose tailor's workshop visited for information and advice by young and old, whether it be the gentry discussing parish matters, or lads with their cricket or football problems. He was cricketer, horticulturalist, bee-keeper, and leader of musical efforts; Parish overseer and one of the first Parish Councillors, but above all a pillar of the Methodist Church. His children and grandchildren followed him in devoted service to the church, and a great grandchild and great-great grandchildren are now in the Sunday School.

David Denton (junior)

Especial mention must be made of Mr Denton's son, David, who followed his father in service in all the forementioned spheres (except bee-keeping which he very much disliked). His service and patience with young people knew no limit and he is still affectionately remembered by many in the village as "Uncle David".

His death at the age of 70, following an accident on his return from a visit to the newly erected Slaithwaite Transmitting Station, was a shock to the village and an immense loss to the church.

United Methodist Free Church

In 1857 three seceding sections of Methodism, The Protestant Methodists, the Methodist Association and the Wesleyan Reformers, born at different times, in different places, for different reasons, having found their ideals to have much in common, came together to form the United Methodist Free Church. The Walton Society must have anticipated this event as the title stone bearing the date 1856 also bore the new name.

For forty years the original chapel served its purpose. while some members fell away and some moved to higher service, others joined and congregations grew. always at the centre was a steadfast band who, through joy and sorrow, maintained their witness.

The musical accompaniments developed from accordion, bass and fiddle, harmonium, to a one manual organ.

1896 to 1932

The Chapel Enlarged

By 1896 the Society had so grown and established itself that the old chapel was not large enough for the congregation, and the present chapel, incorporating the old building, was built with two vestries at the rear and was opened in October of that year by the President of the United Methodist Free Church, the Rev. Geo. Turner.

In 1899 the present two manual organ was installed at a cost of £164.

The chapel was licensed for the solemnization of marriages in 1902, which gave great satisfaction to members and friends. Oil lamps served the community until 1904 when gas was brought into the village and installed in the chapel.

Jubilee Celebrations

The Jubilee Celebrations were held in August, 1906, and the preacher for the Sunday Evening Service was Mr E C Denton (son of David Denton Sen.) a local preacher for over 50 years, who rarely had a Sunday at home and who walked to his appointments to the end of his days.

The service was followed by a Love Feast in the old orthodox fashion with cake and water handed round as a token and pledge of fellowship.

United Methodist Church

A further amalgamation of Methodist Societies took place in 1907, when the oldest seceding body, known as the Methodist New Connexion, joined with the Bible Christians and the United Methodist Free Church and formed the United Methodist Church.

Church going was now popular and nonconformity was developing fast. It had weathered its early persecutions and thrown off, with the aid of its champions in the House of Commons, the various impositions and disabilities placed on it by State and Church.

During the next decade there came to live in the village several families whose stay was only for a few years, but whose service will ever be part of the history of Walton Chapel.

Social events were held in the parish Rooms which stood opposite where the memorial now stands and was demolished for road widening soon after the first world war. The number of Sunday school Scholars was increasing and work among young people developing and the need for a building to supplement the work of the Church was felt.

The Sunday School Built

By generous and sacrificial giving the Sunday school was built. All the work up to floor level was done by members and friends, and the Opening Ceremony was held in June, 1910. The Opener was Mr H D Gowers, grandson of Mr David Denton, sen.

The total cost, including the purchase of the land, and the ground upon which the chapel stands and the furniture, was £800.



Chapel as enlarged 1896

School Built 1910

Internal Alterations

The new Sunday school had not been in commission very long before further accommodation was needed in the chapel and MR F Talbot, who had designed and supervised the building of the school, submitted plans for increasing the seating capacity in the chapel. This was done by utilising one of the vestries for the organ, repositioning the pulpit and choir stalls, and placing more pews in the body of the chapel. Leaded lights with stained glass replaced the old shaded glass windows.

The work was commenced in June and the chapel reopened in September 1915, under the shadow of WW1. No further structural alterations have been made since.

Re-Union of Methodism

On the 20th September, 1932, the Union of the three Methodist Churches (Wesleyan, Primitive, and United) was consummated at a Conference in the Royal Albert Hall, London, where the "Deed of Union" was publicly read and officially signed in the presence of duly elected representatives of the three churches, their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York, and a company of ten thousand people.

1932 to 1956

Subsequently the Wakefield Methodist Circuits (Wesleyan, Primitive and United) were amalgamated and the Walton Methodist Church was one of the thirty seven Churches (now 30) in the newly formed Wakefield Methodist Circuit. prior to the amalgamation,

Walton was in the Wakefield United Methodist Circuit which comprised twelve churches with three ministers.

In the year of 1949 the whole of the Chapel and Sunday School premises were renovated and beautified, electric lighting installed, the organ cleaned and reconditioned, plus an electric blower, at a total cost of £1,263, and the entire sum was raised before the close of the re-opening services on the 23rd and 24th July 1949.

Appreciation

The scope of these few pages does not allow the inclusion of personal references to the many men and women of outstanding character, who have studied in order to teach and preach; or who, by their thought and work, have kept organisations and premises up to a standard of service; or those who by regular attendance at Divine Service, have borne their witness; or those families who have supported the work of the Church through many years.

Especially do we bear in mind those who have given the whole of their adult lives in the service of the Master.

The re-appointment of ministers after three years in one place, has meant that many ministers have left an impression on the Society and we are indebted to them for their guidance and expositions. The circumstances of war kept two of our ministers with us for much longer periods and we feel the Rev. Conrad E. Job and the Rev. H. R. Rowe to be permanently identified with the Walton Society.

The New Century

Now, we face the beginning of the Second Century. The problems of 1956 are not the same as the problems of 1856, but the basic needs are the same.

Today, the whole of the population is expected to be literate and is surrounded with an amazing variety of literature, and the spoken word can be turned on at almost any moment. A hundred years ago many people could neither read nor write and few homes possessed books or took in newspapers, and the chapel was the place where minds and souls could feed.

As we start the new century we have still a large family in our Sunday School, with a loyal band of workers, but we need others to follow on to ensure that the boys and girls of the future are not left as spiritual orphans.

In the chapel there is no shortage of accommodation today, there is a seat waiting for any who would humbly join in simple corporate worship and help maintain a place where Christ's teaching is proclaimed and expounded.

This History of the Church is to be continued

For more information about The Methodist Church, nationwide, click on the logo below.

