

## Methodist Chapel - Bridge



1. The first record of Methodism in the Village is a minute dated 1823 authorising one William Fordred to rent a house for Methodist Meetings 'at no more than 2/6 per week'.

2. He was obviously successful as a Methodist Society was formed with 14 members in 1892(sic). The March Preaching Plan of 1827 shows that services were held on Sundays at 10.30am and 6.30pm, and 10.30am and 2.30pm on alternate weeks. Thus began the gradual build up to 1984. However the first non-conformist Chapel in Bridge was built by the Primitive Methodists in 1868 (The original Treasurers Book is still available) This was situated in Dering Road almost opposite Filmer Road and was built of wood [in use as a dwelling when demolished in 1951].



3. The Wesleyans meanwhile continued to meet in the rented house until the 'Iron Chapel' was built in 1894. There was some controversy with the Chapel Committee in Manchester, who preferred a brick built structure as more economical in maintenance, and if this choice were made, were prepared to advance a loan to assist finances. However should the Trustees persist in their choice of an 'Iron Chapel' then no loan would be forthcoming, furthermore they decreed that all the money for the Chapel must be raised before permission would be given for the opening. It must be 'debtless'. The Wesleyans of Bridge were stirred to greater fund raising efforts, and by dint of [a] lot of hard work raised the money.

The cost of the building, seating, hymn books, mats and oil lamps amounted to £139-17-0 (The farthing showing in the costing for matting, carpets etc £1-4-9)

ONE HUNDRED YEARS from that momentous occasions for those humble men and women, the church is used for worship regularly, and many village organisations have made good use of the premises. During the Second World War the baby clinic operated from the Chapel and continued until 1987. From oil lamps and coal burning stoves, to gas lamps and fires, to electric lighting and power, gas fired convector heaters and double glazed windows, the church has moved with the times, and plays its part in the community.

Pat Grant

The Wesleyan chapel, built in 1894, is of corrugated iron and wood, and seats 150 persons

Transcribed from the text of the 'Methodist Chapel' board from the 1994 Bridge Parish Centenary Exhibition  
MY LIFE CONNECTED WITH

### THE UNION/THE CLOSE, UNION ROAD, BRIDGE

- MISS GLADYS M. LEMAR



In 1933, when we (the Lemar family) came to live in Old Mill House, Union Road, Bridge, we had relations working at The Union, Union Road. My Aunt and Uncle (Mr. and Mrs. Len Lemar) held the posts of Porter and Porteress, and their living accommodation was on the left-hand side of the main entrance (now made into two flats). They had two daughters (our cousins), so as children we were often in The Union. This gave us an insight into life that we would not otherwise have known about.

We spent many hours in the laundry, the chapel, the kitchen, and on the wards, doing little jobs when we could. The women lived on the left-hand side and the men on the right-hand side of the building. We talked frequently to the men and women who had to live there; we knew them all by name. In those days, some who lived in the Union, or the Institution, as it was often referred to, were only in their twenties and thirties. In addition there were the elderly, infirm and mentally retarded. Some women had their babies with them.

I can remember vagrants being brought to The Union, being cleaned and bathed by my Uncle, and given food. After a night's rest, some "went on their way". The vagrants always arrived at, or were brought to, a special building which was situated opposite Old Mill House. The building was demolished in 1976, and later, houses were built on the site, now Mount Charles Walk. The Union gardens were eventually sold and Churchill House and Churchill Close are built where the gardens once were.



I retired from The New Close in June 1985, having worked for The Kent County Council, at The Union/The Close/The new Close, for thirty eight and a half years. I remained a Committee Member for The New Close Amenity Fund until the middle of 1997.

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