

The first record of Methodism in the Village is a minute dated 1823 authorising one William Fordred to rent a house Methodist Meetings "... at no more than 2/6 per week. He was obviously successful as a Methodist Society was formed with 14 members in 1824. The March Preaching Plan of 1824 shows that services were held on Sundays at 10.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m., and 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. on alternate weeks. Thus began the gradual build up to 1894. However the first non-conformist chapel in Bridge was built by the primitive Methodists in 1868. (The original Trust Treasurers Book is still available) This was situated in Dering Road almost opposite Filmer Road and was built of wood.

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 open '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 $\frac{1}{4}$ (The farthing is shown in the costing for Matting, Carpets &c. £1-4-9 $\frac{1}{4}$)

One Hundred years from that momentous occasion for those humble men and women, the church is still 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 here 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.

Some Family names associated with the Chapel over the first hundred years.

Thomas Grant Boyens. An original trustee, the Pulpit Bible was presented in his memory by his Daughter.

Edwin Lansdell of Bridge. Fishmonger by trade, an original trustee, appointed Secretary of the Trust at its first meeting.

William Perry of Bridge, Grocer. Mr Perry purchased the land, including the site for the chapel in March 1893. Trust Treasurer 1894-1907, he sold the site to the Wesleys for £20, and was along with his family, very active in the fund-raising events prior to the opening.

Henry George Price of Bridge, Grocer. Trust Treasurer 1908-until his death in 1936. A great stalwart who with his family played a major role in the work of the Methodist Church. His grandchildren also took part in their time - and still have happy memories of Sunday School days.

Stephen Hogbin, Platelayer, became a trustee in 1919 and served as such until his death.

Thomas Huggett, Carpenter of Bishopscourt. Trustee from 1919, became Trust Treasurer in 1936 until 1958. In addition to these duties Mr Huggett acted as Property Steward, making a Pulpit, Communion Rail and Kneeler by his own hand.

Norman Gray of Bridge appointed trustee in 1953 and in 1958 took over Trust Treasurer duties until 1970. Mr Gray and his wife Alice, also a trustee cared for the

building and grounds, keeping both clean, tidy and well planted up.

Ernest James Purssord of Bridge Butcher, trustee from 1953 Trust Secretary for many years and appointed Trust Treasurer in 1970. Mr Purssord was appointed Steward of the Canterbury Circuit of the Methodist Church in 1946. The Communion Table was presented in memory of his devoted service to the chapel from 1937 until his death in 1972.

There will be many others who have served the Church in diverse ways and activities, whom we have not been able to trace. We owe a great sense of gratitude for their unflinching service.

A description of the Chapel in the first Quinquennial Report.

"The structure consists of dwarf brick walls upon which are carried the Sole Plates for the Timber framed walls.

The Walls externally are clad with corrugated Iron sheeting fixed over a waterproof felt.

Internally the walls are clad with Pine Boarding (tongued and grooved) fixed to the Main Frame.

The Roof is again of Timber construction covered externally with corrugated Iron Sheets.

Internally the roof is of open construction with Main Trusses exposed and the ceiling lined with Pine, matching the walls.

The Floor is of Boarded construction suspended approximately 18" above earth level and ventilated by airbricks."

The total cost of the Chapel, including Lamps, Seating, Books and Mats was £139..17..0 $\frac{1}{4}$.