

HIGH LITTLETON WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL

CONTENTS

Pages

- 2 - 9 Notes on the history of the Chapel and Society.
- 10 Amalgamation of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists
- 10 Index of persons mentioned in the historical notes.
- 11 Whereabouts of deposited records

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF HIGH LITTLETON WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL

High Littleton Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was erected in 1821 and the first service held in it on 9th October 1821, after the necessary certificate of registration had been received from the Bishop of Bath and Wells. A copy of the application and certificate has been preserved at Somerset Record Office, viz:

Application to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells and to his Registrar.

I William WORTH of Midsummer (sic) Norton, Preacher of the Gospel, do hereby certify, that a Chapel in the Parish of High Littleton, in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, and County of Somerset, is intended forthwith to be used as a place of religious worship by an Assembly or Congregation of Protestants; and I do hereby require you to register and record the same according to the provisions of the Act passed in the 52d year of the reign of his Majesty King George the Third, intituled "An Act to repeal certain Acts, and amend other Acts, relating to Religious Worship, and Assemblies, and persons teaching or preaching therein;" and hereby request a certificate thereof. Witness my hand the twenty fifth day of June 1821. (Signed) William WORTH.

Certificate Granted hereon September 11th 1821 - Edw'd PARFITT, D. Reg'r.

The early history of Methodism in High Littleton and the first 90 years of the Wesleyan Chapel was the subject of a lengthy article by Rev. E.R. POLSOM on page 9 of The Methodist Times of September 7, 1911. The article is reproduced in its entirety below:

Methodism in High Littleton - A sin-shifting and saint-making Society.

Methodism, in the early days, was a great saint-making institution. The power of making saints was found, not only in cultured evangelists, but in humble men and in insignificant rural societies. This fact, for such it is, has been amply confirmed and illustrated by the history of the Methodist Society in High Littleton. The village, which is ten miles from both Bath and Wells, contained about seventy houses and four hundred inhabitants, including the Hamlet of Hallatrow, at the close of the eighteenth century.

We do not know who introduced Methodism to the village or the exact date when the Society was formed. Existing data, however, show that preaching services were held there in 1771 and that a Society existed in 1774, when William TUCKER became a member. Two years after his conversion, being twenty-four years of age, William TUCKER accepted the duties and responsibilities of a class-leader. By the way, the appointment of young men was a notable feature of early Methodism in North Somerset. Josiah GREGORY, of Paulton and Elijah BUSH, of Midsomer Norton, both well known to WESLEY, were "younger in years and grace" than William TUCKER when appointed leaders, and all were eminently successful in that department of Christian work. In those days the problem of leadership was serious and difficult, and the urgent needs of the times were partially met by allowing one man to lead, not only more than one class in the Society to which he properly belonged, but classes in different societies. On that principle William TUCKER was appointed leader of the first Methodist class, formed by John VALTON in 1786, in Timsbury, an adjacent village. The strenuous service of this man of God is seen, not merely in the diligent pastoral oversight of the flocks committed to his care, but also in preaching. A "Lord's Day Plan of Shepton Mallet Circuit, 1812 - 13," to which High Littleton then belonged, shows that William TUCKER preached on fifteen out of twenty-two Sundays, December 6 to May 2 inclusive. That "plan", unlike our modern plans, covered a period of five months. Mr. TUCKER, having been a faithful Methodist for fifty-six years, a class-leader fifty-four, and a useful local preacher for more than fifty years, died on April 26, 1830, aged seventy-eight years [*William TUCKER was buried at High Littleton 30 Apr 1830 age 78*]. He cherished the Christian ideal, expressed in the spirit of the life of Jesus in the common tasks of life, and incited many to generous and noble deeds.

The writings of Rev. John VALTON, appointed to the Bristol Circuit in 1778 and the succeeding year, throw light on the condition of the Society and the affectionate nature of the members. In a letter to WESLEY, dated Bristol, February 4, 1779, VALTON remarks: "At two o'clock I preached at Littleton, about a mile off (from Paulton), and found the work very much reviving there. The people are ready to give me their eyes at this place. Here and at Bath one morning, while I was expounding the great promise in Luke 1, 18 and following verses, the glorious Lord was unto us as a place of broad rivers." VALTON's journal also supplies useful information relating to the Society. On May 14, 1787, he preached out of doors "to a large congregation at Littleton," and on Monday, August 10, in the same year, he wrote: "I had a hard day's work yesterday, but God renewed my strength, and enabled me to go through my work. Glory be to His holy name. This evening I preached out of doors at Littleton to a large, serious congregation, and afterwards found much satisfaction in meeting two of the classes." The form and terms of that sentence suggest the existence of more than two classes, but we are not able to give either the exact number of classes or members. In the following year VALTON visited Littleton on October 25 and November 22. "This evening," writing on the earlier date, "we had a precious time at Littleton. My soul was much drawn out in prayer after the sermon." As far as we know, the visit in November was his last, and the words written on that occasion are of considerable interest: "This evening I felt a divine unction so soon as we began singing at Littleton, and I expected the pouring down of the Holy Spirit. The room was crowded and was so hot and I was so weak that I could scarce speak. But need this hinder the blessing. Oh, no!" Here we find the first reference to a "room" for preaching services; all previous records are of sermons "preached out of doors." Every effort to locate and identify the "dwelling-house" has failed; but a description of the "room" has been found in the Methodist magazine published in 1821. It was "a very low small room in a dwelling-house where our preachers, for more than half a century, preached the gospel to the poor."

The Society, consisting of thirty members, was transferred from Bristol to the Shepton Mallet Circuit in 1799; and, in circuit accounts of finance, was bracketed with Paulton until 1806. The first combined contribution to the Quarter Board was £1 11s.6d and, when entered separately, Paulton sent £1 5s. and Littleton 9s. In 1813 the Society, having increased its membership to forty-five, was added to the Midsomer Norton Circuit and sent a contribution of £1 16s.6d. to the Quarterly Meeting. If ever a Society was cribbed, cabined and confined it was the one in Littleton; and all efforts to procure land for a chapel were fruitless. About this time, "it was suspected that a person who was favourable to Methodism intended to build a chapel on his premises; but the man who just then renewed the lease took care to prevent this by inserting a clause in the deed that, if a chapel were built, or any preaching suffered on the premises, the lease should thereby be forfeited." Hope was deferred, but the heart was not sick. The time of triumph was not yet, and the Society, disappointed and baffled, waited patiently for the realisation of its ideal. The tide of circumstances changed its course, and a member of the Society became the owner of a piece of freehold land, in a central and prominent position, on which a chapel was ultimately erected. The new owner, though comparatively poor, offered to give the money that should be paid for the site towards the cost of the building. A spirit of generosity permeated the Society, and several colliers and labourers gave five pounds each to the fund. Some, unable to contribute money, gave gratuitous labour, and thus reduced the cost of the scheme. All promises and engagements were honourably fulfilled, and the new chapel was opened for divine worship on Tuesday, October 9, 1821. Revs. REECE, HOPWOOD and AVER preached on the occasion, and the collections amounted to £56 10s.0¹/₄d. - note the farthing. These collections and subscriptions met more than half the cost of the chapel. Methodist liberality and zeal stimulated the Protestant Church of England to greater activity and enterprise. An organ was built, and "Sunday evening lectures" were given in the parish church, and many people were attracted to the services. There were others, however, influenced by different methods and motives. Some of the principle inhabitants, being determined to enforce the law, which required all persons to attend some place of worship, constrained them to attend the services in the chapel. Sufficient accommodation was provided in the church and chapel for all who were induced either by fear or love to unite in the worship of God.

Mr. George CARTER was born just a few years after the opening of the chapel, and sheaves of Methodist memories inspire and gladden his heart today. He was a collier, and toiled in Timsbury pits for more than fifty years, and received not more than ten shillings per week for his labour. The chapel, before its enlargement, had a box pulpit at one end and a gallery at the other, while a big chandelier hung from the centre. Children sat close to the pulpit and the singers. The orchestra, consisting of trombone, clarionet (sic), flute, 'cello, violin and big "fiddle," "led the singing," and incidentally pleased the bairns. "Children," said Mr. CARTER, "used to go to the love-feasts; and enjoy them, because a bun was given to each one. Now, as times are so good, we have biscuits; but the youngsters don't come." Unruly children in chapel or school were filled with fear when John WILKINS, superintendent of the school, issued his usual threat: "Be still, wool 'ee, or I'll gee thee a smack on the head." The eyes of the old man sparkle with delight as he talks of the revivals in the Society. "Bless 'ee, my boy," he will say, "I've seen lots on 'em down at the same time. We don't see anything like it now." Mr. CARTER speaks in glowing terms of the "good old missionary meetings, when the chapel was packed on a week-night, and the enthused congregation gave £20 to the collection." "A taste of those old experiences would do me lots of good," says the venerable Methodist.

James HALL, of Mearns, a hamlet near Littleton was a good man, and lavished affection on the members of his class. His wife, an invalid for many years, received much comfort and cheer from the testimonies given in the class-meetings, which were held regularly in their house. Here, as in no other place, members realised their union and communion with Christ, and, with much thought and prayer, gave attention to the cultivation of the Christian heart - the Calvary heart. Mr. HALL conducted the class in the old-fashioned way. Each member was called by name, and, after relating his experience, was exhorted by the leader *To deeper sink and higher rise, and to perfection grow.* Mr. HALL usually called upon his wife last of all for "a word for the Master," and thus addressed the afflicted saint: "Well, Mary, my dear, how is it with you? I feel for 'ee yer knows, and I'm very sorry." "The Lord is very good to I," she would say. "A bruised reed He will not break and a smoking flax He will not quench. He is always with I in the furnace of affliction, and all things work together for good to them that love Him. And I do love Him; blessed be His holy name!" "Mary," responded the leader, tenderly, "be thou faithful unto death"; and, addressing the class, "let us all be kindly affectioned one to the other". Eyes glistened with tears and hearts overflowed with genuine Christian sympathy as all sang: *Help us to help each other, Lord, Each other's cross to bear.*

The language and habits of the people in Littleton have considerably changed during the last sixty years. Then it was a common custom for men, as they met in groups by the wayside, to indulge in vulgar conversation and to use obscene language. If anyone administered a moral shock to a Methodist then he was regarded as a leader and a hero. Public opinion, however, as well as public habits, has changed. Vulgarity and obscenity have given place to courtesy and a cleaner vocabulary, and the change is largely due to courageous and consistent members of the Methodist Society. Joseph EVANS, old Joe EVANS as he was called, was one of the most conspicuous of the militant Methodists who rebuked wicked men for abusing God's great gift of speech. Joseph, rich in saving common-sense, knew how to awaken and strengthen the sense of shame and sin in these men. He not only put them to silence, but often to flight. The good man consistently refused to enter into argument with the men, but, with the light of love in his eyes and a sweet smile upon his countenance, simply reproved, and then exhorted them to mend their manners. Joseph's influence mightily increased, and ungodly men would keep either a reverent or cowardly silence as he passed along the street. These old Methodists knew not only how to defend their positions, "to hold their own," but how to attack the strongholds of the evil one.

In 1839 Miss Matilda KENNARD went to the village, and, as Sunday-school teacher, tract distributor and sick visitor, served the Church with real devotion for seven years. During the intervals between Sunday services Miss KENNARD, eating her mid-day meal as she walked from house to house, ministered tenderly to the afflicted and aged, and led many into the way of peace. Her scholars, attributing their conversion to her exemplary life and noble work, grew up to be women of piety and useful members of the Church of Christ. Miss KENNARD married the late Thomas EMERY, of Farmborough, and in that village, for a further period of forty years, rendered conspicuous service to the people of God. Local preachers especially received a cordial welcome and generous hospitality in the home of Mr. and Mrs. EMERY.

As a result of a shocking accident in Greyfield pit, Enos BROOKS lost an arm, fingers off the remaining hand, and both eyes. His unfaltering faith in the providence of God and his love for sinful men made him a remarkably successful class-leader and a powerful local preacher. This sightless seer, in the midst of great tribulation, proclaimed with unflinching cheerfulness the Gospel of God's love and grace. He was able to repeat hymns, Psalms, and chapters of the Bible, and conduct meetings without any assistance. The mutilated man, by his presence alone, bore silent but eloquent testimony to the efficacy of faith and to the sustaining power of the love of God. In days of distress and illness, Mrs. SAGE, and other good women from the church, made dainty and nourishing food, and carried it gladly to the blind man's home. [*Enos BROOKS, Rotcombe was buried at High Littleton 11 Apr 1873, age 71.*]

Farmer (William) HEDGES, who passed to his reward about five years ago, was a strong-willed, stalwart supporter of Methodism and all her institutions. He while mildly protesting that he did not want his own way, usually had it. Mr. HEDGES held various offices in the church, and always welcomed Methodist preachers to his home. Farmer HEDGES, fearing no one but God and nothing but sin, was a tower of strength to Methodism and a straightforward follower of Jesus Christ.

There are now about sixty members in senior classes, and eleven in a junior class. Nineteen officers and teachers instruct and incite to holy living the 128 scholars in the Sunday-school and the 120 children in the Band of Hope. A morning school has been started and already yields excellent results. A chapel-keeper's house has been acquired, outbuildings erected, and plant for lighting all the premises with acetylene gas installed. The new chapel hymn-book was used on the first Sunday after publication. The new school hymn-book will be presented to the scholars, and used at once in the school. These facts show not only the godly heritage of the church, but a modern spirit that deserves success.

The photographs* which illustrate this article are by Mr. C RHOADES, of Clutton. E. R. POLSOM.

- * The 8 photographs were of:
Schoolroom, Chapel, and Caretaker's House, High Littleton.
The Batch, High Littleton.
High Littleton Sunday-school.
Rev. D.C. GRIFFITHS, Paulton Circuit.
George CARTER and Descendants - four generations.
High Littleton Church Officers. Front - William G. BEACHAM and George HEDGES (Society Stewards).
Back - Herbert HEAL (Chapel Steward) and Samuel PAYNE (Poor Steward).
Morning School Officers. Charles Octavius RHOADES (Secretary), A. YOUNG (Superintendent),
C.H. PAYNE (Assistant-Superintendent).
Afternoon School Officers and Teachers.
Back row - Samuel BEACHAM (Supt.), Henry TUCKER, Thomas EVANS, Gilbert MAGGS, John FORD,
Timothy GARD, Arthur MAGGS.
Front row - Miss Florrie SMITH, Miss Daisy BLINMAN, Miss Amy SLADE, Mrs. FORD,
Miss Eva GARD, Miss Flora FLOWER.

Centenary Meetings.

The High Littleton Society received more publicity in 1921, on the occasion of its centenary.

A newspaper article [publication uncertain] of October 1921, by Frederick BALCH, entitled "Two days in a Somerset Country Circuit" includes references to High Littleton Wesleyan Methodist Chapel:

On Monday, High Littleton held its Centenary meetings, The Rev. T. Ferrier HULME, the Chairman of the District, had preached on the Sunday. The Secretary, the Rev. George ALLCOCK, preached on the Monday, and a fine congregation greeted him. A full Chapel at night. The whole of the premises has been renovated, and the fresh look of everything was an inspiration to the speakers.

We had an ideal report from Mr. H. HEDGES. He reviewed the doings of the century. In fact, he went back to 1771 for the beginnings of Methodism in the village.
[There follows a brief synopsis of the report, which contained the same information as in POLSOM'S article above.]

We had as chairman Mr. G.P. CAPLE, of Bishop Sutton, who has been a preacher for over sixty years. Baptist and Primitive Methodist ministers took part, and the Vicar of High Littleton gave a fine spirited speech. It was a great day for the Society and for the circuit.

A report on the Centenary meeting appeared in the Western Daily Press on - October 1921. In it, Mr. H. HEDGES gave a history of the Church [All as per the 11 page document referred to below, up as far as 1921.]

Notes in Bristol Record Office say that Mr. Herbert HEAL, Secretary to the Trustees gave a report to the Centenary meetings on 9th and 10th October 1921, including a history gathered from Methodist Magazine published in 1921 and Methodist Times of 17th September 1911, containing information collected by the late Rev. E.R. POLSOM, Mrs. Henry CARTER of Farmborough and others.

Manuscript records in Bristol Record Office (Reference 38785 HL/2)

Historical events

A handwritten document of 11 pages sets out in chronological order, noteworthy events in the history of High Littleton Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. The first few pages repeat almost word for word the information in POLSOM's article. The additional information is as follows:

1821 - The ministers who preached at the opening of the chapel were Rev. Richard REECE (Chairman of the Bath District), Rev. Henry S. HOPWOOD (of Bath) and Rev. William AVER (of Kingswood, Bristol). The new chapel has a box pulpit - with a door to shut in the preacher at one end, and a gallery at the other end. The seats on the sides consisted of wooden stools with back-rests, while a stove provided warmth, and candles illumination.

1839-1876 - Another of John WILKINS' sayings for quelling unruly children was "If doesn't shut up, I'll meake thee head rattle like a pumpkin."

Other well-known names were Thomas WILKINS, John CARTER, John EVANS, Enos YOUNG and James HALL, who lived at Mearns. On his way to the services, the latter passed a house where lived a woman who often taunted him about his beliefs. But his reply to her provocative remarks was usually, You'm a fine 'oman, Rose, but if doesn't mind, the devil u'll have thee."

1876 - saw the installation of oil lamps - after such protests as " You'm gwine ta burn the pleace down" and "Whur be gwine to kip yer oil". One of the hymns used was, appropriately, "Let the lower lights be burning". The music around this period was provided by an "orchestra" consisting of a trombone, clarinet, flute, violin, 'cello and double bass (or as some said "big viddle"). Later, the singing was accompanied by a harmonium, which stood at the back of the gallery, opposite the pulpit.

1886 - brought the division of the Midsomer Norton circuit, High Littleton being attached to the newly formed Paulton circuit, under the ministry of the Rev. John KNOWLES. During his first winter he regularly came to High Littleton on Friday evenings to conduct a Bible class. He died the following year (a tablet to his memory stands in the Paulton Central Chapel).

1887 - New pitch-pine pews now replaced the former stools. The box pulpit was removed and a new rostrum erected with a lamp on each corner.

1888 - Death of Jonah DIX - faithful member and worker [Jonah DIX was buried at High Littleton 22 Jun 1888 age 52].

189- - Brother "Joe" SIMS of Paulton was so enthusiastic when preaching that perspiration would roll down his face. One evening as he threw out his arm to emphasize a particular point, his hand caught the left lamp, smashing the glass and globe to fragments. Whereupon he exclaimed "Never mind about a lamp-glass, you can buy another one tomorrow", and went on with the sermon. He was also known to favour long services. One Sunday evening he commenced the service at 6 o'clock and continued until 7.40. A love-feast followed, at which his opening prayer lasted twenty minutes and after the stewards had served the customary water and biscuits, Brother SIMS closed the meeting at twenty minutes to nine! (He died about 1914).

1893 - The property adjoining the church was acquired as a site for a new school and classrooms, for the sum of £185, plus £15 for the transfer of deeds etc.

1897 (April) - Plans for the new school etc., with freestone corners and surrounds, were drawn up by Mr. W.F. BIRD, M.I.A.M.C.E. and eventually built by Mr. GAIT at an approximate cost of £400. Note: the blocks of freestone, each weighing about one ton, were brought from Coombe Down Quarries, in horse-drawn farm wagons, by Messrs. HEDGES and HEAL, free of charge, and cut by the contractor on the site. At one period there was a considerable debt upon the premises, but after many years it was eventually cleared, largely by means of bazaars and fetes. In connection with this, one incident has often been recalled. A marquee was hired for a field event but as it was in use on the previous evening, some three miles away, was not available until 12 o'clock. Accordingly arrangements were made for several men of the church to be at the site, with two farm wagons and four horses, at midnight. They set out in total darkness, - no lights on vehicles in those days - but soon there was illumination, for a terrific storm broke, and the vivid lightening, accompanied by the constant roll of thunder, lit up the scene. To load and transport heavy poles and sheets, and at the same time control the now frightened horses, was no easy task. But it was accomplished, and by 10 o'clock the next morning, the marquee was ready. Sunshine followed storm, and a successful day ensued.

1898-1905 - Various decoration schemes and repairs to heating apparatus were carried out. Note: this apparatus required frequent attention in use, and the caretaker of the day, Mr. Gilbert MAGGS, who lived some distance from the chapel, often lit the fire on Saturday evenings. One particular weekend, when the weather was exceptionally cold, he arose from his warm bed at 2 a.m. on Sunday morning, and set out to re-stoke the fire, only to be challenged, en route, by the village policeman as to "what he was up to at that hour." The amazed "bobby" could scarcely believe his ears, when he found the reason was "devotion to duty."

1906 - Nov 6th saw the death of (Farmer) William HEDGES, at the age of 80 [William HEDGES, New Rd, Farmborough was buried at High Littleton 9 Nov 1906 age 80]. For many years he was the superintendent of

the Sunday-school, and Steward and Treasurer of the church, being noted for the hospitality, always available to preachers, at his home. He was a kind and generous man, but possesses a strong mind. Having made sure that a particular action was right, he would stand by his convictions. After he had dared to express his opinion, in no uncertain terms, to a minister at the Midsomer Norton manse, he was shown to the door with the parting comment "Fare thee well, HEDGES, fare thee well." His call to Sunday-school work was most remarkable. When returning from a morning service, he saw a number of young lads wandering aimlessly along the village street, and as the thought of their wasted capabilities flashed quickly through his mind, he asked them if they would go to the Sunday-school. One of them, a little more quick-witted than his companions, immediately challenged him with the words "We will go, if you will go with us." On the next Sunday a new class was formed with Mr. HEDGES as the teacher, and from that time on, his interest in the school never wavered. In later years when he was the superintendent, it sometimes happened that a junior class was without a teacher, whereupon he would go to the Bible class, put his hand upon the shoulder of a senior scholar, and would say quietly, "I want you." One lad - Alfred EVANS - who was thus called, stammered "I, I, I." "Yes", said Mr. HEDGES, "You, you, you." On one occasion, after this had happened several times in succession, the leader of the class, John FORD, ventured to say "Farmer, I wish you wouldn't keep taking my boys." Instantly came the answer "John, I am the superintendent of this Sunday-school, and if I need a boy, I shall have him." Incidentally Mr. HEDGES was a man of wide interests and figured prominently in parochial life. His opinions were highly esteemed and as a Guardian of the parish, his influence was always used in procuring benefits for the poor and aged. Other contemporaries of that time to be "called home", were George EVANS & Matthew YOUNG.

1907 - About this time it became known that the SWEETLAND Organ Building Co. of Bath had a pipe organ for sale. Apparently, this instrument had been built to the order of a particular church, who for some reason, could not afterwards take delivery. It was therefore on offer at the bargain price of £100, ex works, and the trustees resolved to purchase. Transport was again provided by horse-drawn farm wagons and Messrs. SWEETLANDS agreed to dismantle, pack all the pipes etc. in straw - for safe travelling - and re-erect in the chapel for the additional sum of £11.

1909 - saw the installation of a new heating apparatus for £40 and an acetylene gas plant for £30, at which time it is believed that the chandelier was removed from the roof.

1910 - A long felt want had been a caretaker's house, and when the dwelling at the back of the chapel came on the market, the trustees resolved to purchase, and secured the property for £260.

1911 - About this time a series of photographs were taken. One of the church shows Mr. George HEDGES, son of Farmer William HEDGES, standing at the entrance. Another portrayed the interior at Harvest time. Note the acetylene gas pendants, the letters H.F. formed by pinning green leaves to the crimson pulpit fall also the draped lines of hips, hundreds of which had been gathered, and threaded on fine twine, by the children, as their contribution to the decorations - a colossal task. Others taken were of a group of the Sunday-school officers and teachers, taken outside the schoolroom, the morning school officers and the stewards. An article on the history of the church was compiled by the Rev. E.R. POLSOM, and together with some of these and other photographs, was published in the Methodist Recorder (sic), dated September 7 1911.

1913 - Extensive repairs were carried out at a cost of £90.

1918 - On March 13, the church suffered the loss, by death, of Timothy GARD at the age of 67 [*Timothy GARD, Scumbrum was buried at High Littleton 16 Mar 1918, age 67*].

191- - A Memorial Tablet was erected to the memory of the organist Mr. Reginald MAGGS, who lost his life while serving his King and Country [*Gilbert Reginald MAGGS died 12 Apr 1917, aged 22*]. He nobly died when trying to save the lives of his comrades in France, without thought of himself.

1921 - A decoration scheme, which cost about £45, was carried out early in the summer in view of the Centenary celebrations of the chapel. These commenced on Sunday Oct. 9th, when the Chairman of the district the Rev. T. Ferrier HULME conducted the services. His text in the morning was "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up [in] to the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122, 1), and in the evening "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3, 17-18). On Monday, Oct 10th the Rev. George E. ALLCOCK, the secretary of the Bristol district preached at 4 o'clock from the words "Behold the Lamb of God" (St. John 1, 29). Tea followed, and the evening meeting was presided over by Mr. G.P. CAPLE, a veteran local preacher for over 60 years. Addresses were given by the Rev. ALLCOCK, the Rev. Edgar WHITTON (Baptist Minister, Paulton), as well as the Primitive Methodist minister and the Vicar of High Littleton [*Rev. G. Henry LAWRENCE*]. The two circuit ministers, the Rev. Frederick BALCH and the Rev. G. L. FROST were also present.

1926 - came the death of Mr. Samuel BEACHAM, and later a tablet to his memory was erected in the chapel

1930 - Electric light was installed by Mr. MAWER of Timsbury at a cost of £39. A piano was also purchased for £19.

1932 - The church suffered the loss of Mr. John FORD and later a tablet was erected to his memory [*John FORD, New Rd. Farmborough was buried at High Littleton 14 Oct 1931, age 75*].

1935 - The new Methodist Hymn-book was introduced [*A card preserved in the Baptismal Register dated 24th March 1934 from 21 Carlisle Road, Birkdale reads - Dear Mr. HEDGES, As promised I am sending you the new hymn book for use in the pulpit, which I trust will be acceptable and will have many years of service. With kind regards, yours sincerely W.B. LEWIS, p.p. W.G.L.*]

On Oct 29th the church sustained a great loss in the passing of Mrs. Julia Annie HEDGES at the age of 60 years [*Julia Anne HEDGES, Heighgrove Farm, Farmborough was buried at High Littleton 2 Nov 1935, age 60*]. Coming from the Baptist Church at Paulton on her marriage to Mr. George HEDGES, she entered fully into the life of the church, in all its aspects and for over 33 years gave devoted service to Methodism.

1936 - A tablet to her [Mrs. HEDGES'] memory was erected in the church by her family, and at a dedication service on March 29th was unveiled by her nephew, Arthur HEAL. The church also contained a tablet in memory of Mr. William PAYNE, who was a regular worshipper for many years.

193- - About this time the church received a legacy of £500, together with a further sum of £200 to be spent in some form of memorial. As the North and West windows were in bad condition, the trustees

resolved, after consultation with the family concerned, to install four stained glass windows, together with a commemorative tablet. The full inscription is given as being self-explanatory: "This tablet with the adjacent windows is to perpetuate the memory of Arthur George DANDO who died 19th of March 1926, aged 63 years and Caroline his wife who died 8th December 1935 aged 81 years, also to commemorate the youthful Christian instruction of our Parents in this building. On earth two gentle souls the less, In heaven two angels more. Interred in Edmonton Cemetery, London. Erected by the will of Eva Mary DANDO their only daughter who died 11th of May 1935, aged 48 years and George Ernest DANDO, their son. Their affection for this House of Prayer was shown in a gift of £500 to the Trustees, the interest to be applied to it's renovation, redecoration, repair and maintenance."

1937 - Death of Mr. Samuel PAYNE, Steward and Trustee for many years [Samuel PAYNE, Lansdown Villa was buried at High Littleton 25 Mar 1937, age 70].

1941 - The Sunday morning services of the Wesleyan Methodists and the Primitive Methodists were combined, being held in each church alternately. This was the outcome of the week-evening service amalgamation, which had been in existence for several winters, the practice being for each minister to preach in the other's church, alternately.

1946/7 - saw several new additions, including the installation of an electric organ blower £77, new heating boiler £32, new iron rails £66 and repairs to the caretaker's house £98.10/-

1954/5 - After long periods of discussion and consideration - and some dissent - it was finally resolved - though by no means unanimously - to close the church and the last service was conducted by the Rev. H. Hector CHICK on Wednesday, August 31st 1955.

Three page draft of an address on the death of William HEDGES in 1906.

"Now the labourer's task is o'er, Now the battle day is past, Now upon the farther shore, Lands the voyager at last."

Again the pearly gates have been opened, Again the "Well Done" has been said and the starry crown has been triumphantly bestowed. The Angel of Death has been very busy amongst the veterans of the circuit throughout the year and has now claimed Mr. William HEDGES, our beloved Sunday-School Superintendent. Mr. HEDGES was a man of wide interests and figured prominently in Parochial life. His opinions were highly esteemed and as Guardian of the parish his influence was always used in procuring benefits for the poor and aged. His connection with the High Littleton Wesleyan Society dates from 1864 and from that time until his death, he has always taken a most active interest in all Church work, filling various offices and contributing largely to the finances.

His chief interest however, centred around the Sunday School, where for so many years he has laboured so unceasingly. The call to Sunday School work was most remarkable. When returning from Chapel one Sunday, he saw a number of young lads wandering aimlessly through the village and as the thoughts of their wasted capabilities flashed quickly through his mind, he was led to speak to them and asked them to go to Sunday School. The boys were quick witted and replied "We will go, if you will come with us." The next Sunday a new class was formed with Mr. HEDGES as teacher. Truly God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. From that time Mr. HEDGES' interest in the Sunday School was maintained and time only strengthened it.

At that time the Sunday School was held in the Chapel, but Mr. HEDGES' ambition was to see a room more convenient for carrying on the work. Soon a favourable opportunity for erecting a Schoolroom occurred and it was one of the proudest days of his life, when he was enabled to lay the foundation stone of the edifice, which now stands and deposit thereon the donations from the Sunday School. His great wish was to know the building was free from debt, but a small balance still remains for those who are left to carry on the work to erase. Mr. HEDGES was an admirable Superintendent, dealing in a most tactful manner with the difficulties, which had to be met and, when dealing with refractory scholars, was invariably the conqueror.

Fain would we linger over the many phases of his character, but we must be content to leave him in "His Gracious Keeping" and endeavour to live so that one day we may meet in that land, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

Three page draft of a report on finances, January 7th 1908.

I would like to give you [particulars of] a few items of moneys raised for the High Littleton Wesleyan Trust in connection with the Chapel and Schoolroom, since the year 1893.

	£	s	d
The site where the Schoolroom now stands was purchased in the spring of 1893 for the sum of £185. The transfer of deeds etc. and expenses £15, making together	200	-	-

I may say that at that time there was little or no balance in hand and that this sum was cleared of(f) before building was commenced.

In the year 1896 the School was built [the date on the plans suggest that the year was actually 1897] and opening services were held in November of that year. The cost of building was as follows:

	£	s	d
Mr. GAIT's contract	300	17	1
To the Earl of WARWICK for mortar etc.	12	11	2
Mr. FEAR for seats	13	10	-

Mr. W.F. BIRD fees	14 18 6	
Furniture etc. for School and Classrooms	5 - -	
Lamps etc.	1 10 -	
Other small a/c's	<u>62 16 3</u>	
making a total for building of		411 3 -
Interest on money borrowed for building work, estimated at		50 - -
One half cost of pump and erection		3 - -
Mr. Moses HEAL's a/c for renovating Chapel 1898		20 14 -
Mr. W. F. BIRD same time for architecture etc.		2 - -
Mr. GAIT's a/c for repairs to School and Chapel 1899		6 12 6
Mr. Moses HEAL's a/c for repairing heating apparatus and Chapel Sept. 1901		8 13 10
Mr. W.J. HEAL's a/c for repairing Chapel roof etc. 1903		16 15 -
New stove and piping for School room Dec. 1903		3 7 7
Repairs to Chapel and School during 1904		2 10 7
To Mr. TOVEY for renovation and decoration of Chapel April 1905		19 - -
Mr. HEAL's a/c for floorcloth and sundries for Chapel 1905		3 6 6
Repairs to Chapel and School 1905-6		1 6 3
New organ and alterations to suit same April 1907		<u>111 4 3</u>
Making a total of		<u>£859 13 6</u>

The a/c for 1907 is as follows:

In debt at the beginning of the year		£70 - -
Balance in hand from School and Chapel a/c		17 17 10
Harvest Thanksgiving realised		11 - -
Christmas Effort		31 - -
Collections and various items		12 4 -
Grant from Chapel Committee		<u>20 - -</u>
Total income being		92 1 10
Expenditure:		
(Loan) Paid 25th March 1907	20 - -	
Interest	15 9	
(Balance of Loan) Paid Dec 31st	50 - -	
Interest	1 13 9	
Other expenses and a/c's not yet settled, the Treasurer has estimated at	<u>6 14 6</u>	79 4 -
Leaving us a balance in hand		<u>£12 17 10</u>

As to the remainder of the amount, we cannot give you exact particulars as to how it was raised, as Mr. G. HEDGES had not the handling of the books at that time, but we believe, chiefly by two collections per quarter, Bazaars, Harvest festivals, Christmas trees and Donations. But this we do know, that our Premises are now free from debt, for which we are very thankful to God and also to those who have in any way helped to extinguish the debt. The Treasurer wished me to say that the organ is free from debt.

Three page draft of a tribute to the late Mr. Samuel BEACHAM, died 1926.

Our Chapel here at High Littleton has suffered almost an irreparable loss through the passing to the homeland of Mr. Samuel BEACHAM.

More than forty years has passed since he came amongst us, when he threw himself wholeheartedly into the work of our Society, first as Sunday School Teacher, where he proved himself to be a diligent student of the Bible, thus enabling him to be able to impart to the young life, who sat before him in his class, the true Word of God.

He was always interested in the young, in Temperance and also always a leader both with the Band of Hope and the Good Templars and, being a strong total abstainer, he tried to teach the truths he believed to the young. He was never out of place when he was with the children or any young people, thus with his life, he tried to be both cheerful and happy, proving to the young folk that to be a christian was to be happy.

For 30 years Mr. BEACHAM was superintendent of the Sunday-school, first as Assistant to Mr. William HEDGES, at the death of Mr. Enos YOUNG [*Enos YOUNG, Scumbrum, Farmborough was buried at High Littleton 21 Nov 1896, age 59*], which office he held for 11 years, then at the death of Mr. HEDGES 19 years ago, he became full Superintendent, holding that position until the time of his death, always proving himself to be a capable Superintendent, loving his school. He always, when able, tried to be present, which meant no small sacrifice for himself, after attending the morning preaching service, going back to Clutton for dinner and then back to school at 2 o'clock. His addresses to the school on these afternoons will long live in the memory of those who heard them.

For many years he was one of the Society Stewards of this Church, doing his work well, and also Class Leader, being appointed to that office on the death of Mr. John EVANS 32 years ago, which office he was holding at the time of his decease. He was also a Trustee of this place for very many years, always taking an interest in his Church, which he loved to serve, shewing his loyalty and devotion to his Lord and Master, and who among us will forget the voice we loved to hear in song,

when he sang - "Only remembered by what we have done." Of him we may truly say it has been "Well done", for he always took such an interest both in Social and Spiritual work.

For more than fifty years Mr. BEACHAM has been a member of the Church of God, first at Timsbury and then with us here at High Littleton and was ever willing to perform any little act of duty in a friendly and brotherly manner, which he was asked to do in the Church. And now, who is there amongst us upon whom the mantle of the departed will fall to carry on the work of the Church of God here.

Of his daily life in work, much may be said, especially by those with whom he worked, as one who did his work conscientiously, never failing in doing that which he was convinced was right in the interest of his employer and his fellow men. To the widow and children of the departed we tender our deepest sympathy and prayers, thanking God for those amongst them who are able to contribute to the service of the Church of God, which we feel has been the outcome of a father's influence in home life.

Five page draft of a response to a presentation to Mr. Herbert HEAL, 1950 [Many of the reminiscences are recorded in the chronological list of events on pages 5 to 7 above]

My dear friends, I hardly know what to say, but I do say this, I did not desire it, nor do I deserve this honour, but I greatly appreciate your kindness. I have only done my duty as Secretary and if, by God's help, I have been able to render any service to this Church and Society, I have been amply repaid by the joy and pleasure I have received in that service and I very sincerely thank all kind friends who have contributed towards this splendid gift. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, might I give a few reminiscences? Well friends, this is my spiritual birthplace and is very dear to me. It is like home to me. I was brought here before I could walk and have been coming here ever since.

In 1887, Rev. John KNOWLES, who was the first Superintendent appointed to the Paulton Circuit after it's formation from the Midsomer Norton Circuit, held a Bible Class here on Friday evenings and I can remember as a lad coming with my father. I came through the Sunday School, my teachers were Messrs. George EVANS, Matthew YOUNG, John EVANS and later John FORD. At the age of 14, just about where the organ blower now stands, I decided for Christ and have been a member for 61 years. I think Mr. HEDGES and me have been members here as long as any one except Mr. Gilbert MAGGS.

We have seen many changes, good times as well as lean times. We have seen this Chapel packed and people outside unable to get in. In the Classroom yonder we have had some good times, 15 or 16 of us and two or three fiddles to lead the singing and it was not just the leader talking to us, we all had to take our share. Brother John FORD would say: "Well William, how is it with you tonight? Herbert, what have you got to say?" and so on round the class; and then he would give us a few words of encouragement; it was a spiritual uplift. I am afraid we have lost some of the zeal that our older members had.

And then on the lighter side, we can remember Mr. Joe SIMS preaching here and the sweat running down his face, when he threw his arms back and his left hand struck the lamp on the corner of the rostrum and smashed the globe and the glass and he said "Never mind about a lamp glass or two, you can buy another tomorrow" and he went on as though nothing had happened. He was also preaching here one Sunday evening and finished the first service at 20 minutes to eight and then we had an old fashioned Love Feast, with the Stewards taking round the water and biscuits - we don't have them now - and Brother SIMS took the first 20 minutes in prayer and let us out at 20 minutes to 9 - some service that!

So we have gone through the years from candles to lamps, acetylene gas and electric light. I can remember these pitch pine seats being just in, in 1887, at a cost of £114. It used to be stools, with a rail at the back, down the sides, with the stove on that side and the pulpit on a pedestal. Also, in 1893, land purchased at the side of the Chapel for £200, 1896 Schools built £411, 1907 New Organ £111, Heating Apparatus 1909 £40, also Acetylene Gas plant £30, 1910 Caretaker's House and Offices £260, 1913 Repairs £90, 1921 Decorations £45, 1930 Electric Light £39, Piano £19, Decoration of Chapel and School £64, 1937 Decoration £37, 1945 ditto £17, 1946 new boiler £32, Organ blower £77, Repairing and new iron railings £66, 1947 Repairs to Caretaker's house £98 10/-. These items are special, apart from ordinary repairs and lighting and heating, which would amount to well over £2,000 - and so God has blessed us and his work is still being carried on.

And to those young men who have taken office, we would wish them every success. They will have some things to learn, which will only come by experience and get as much pleasure; and may God's blessing rest on them all. Again, I would like to say a great big thank you. I greatly appreciate your kindly action and shall prize this memento. Thank you very much.

4 page list (believed to be in Herbert HEAL's writing) of Wesleyan Methodist Ministers of the Midsomer Norton Circuit from 1821 to 1885 and of the Paulton Circuit from 1886 to 1967.

In total 131 Ministers are named (list not reproduced here).

Amalgamation of Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists

In 1933, the branches of the Methodist Church amalgamated and the distinction between Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism ceased. With both a Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Chapel (erected 1909) in High Littleton, the Wesleyan Chapel became known as the Central Methodist Church and the Primitive, the Lansdown Place Methodist Church. In 1971 the 150th anniversary of a Methodist church building in High Littleton was celebrated. The President of the Methodist Church, Rev. K. WAIGHTS, preached at a thanksgiving service and unveiled a plaque on the site of the former Central (Wesleyan) Methodist Church, which had been sold off several years before and converted into offices and a car park for Ken BIGGS (Contractors) Ltd. A plaque on the wall of one of the rooms in the Primitive Methodist Chapel commemorates the amalgamation of the two Methodist Societies in High Littleton in September 1955 and records the names of those commemorated in the former Central Methodist Chapel, viz. Samuel BEACHAM, John FORD, Julia HEDGES, Reginald MAGGS, Arthur DANDO, Caroline DANDO and William PAYNE.

INDEX OF PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE HISTORICAL NOTES

ALLCOCK	Rev. George	4, 6	PAYNE	Samuel	4, 7
AVER	Rev. William	3, 5	PAYNE	William	6, 10
BALCH	Rev. Frederick	4, 6	POLSOM	Rev. E.R.	2, 4, 5, 6
BEACHAM	Samuel	4, 6, 8, 9, 10	REECE	Rev. Richard	3, 5
BEACHAM	William G.	4	RHOADES	Charles Octavius	4
BIRD	W.F.	5, 8	SAGE	Mrs.	4
BLINMAN	Miss Daisy	4	SIMS	Joe	5, 9
BROOKS	Enos	4	SLADE	Miss Amy	4
BUSH	Elijah	2	SMITH	Miss Florrie	4
CAPLE	G.P.	4, 6	TOVEY	Mr.	8
CARTER	George	3, 4	TUCKER	Henry	4
CARTER	Mrs. Henry	5	TUCKER	William	2
CARTER	John	5	VALTON	Rev. John	2
CHICK	Rev. H. Hector	7	WAIGHTS	Rev. K.	10
DANDO	Arthur George	7, 10	WESLEY	John	2
DANDO	Caroline	7, 10	WHITTON	Rev. Edgar	6
DANDO	Eva Mary	7	WILKINS	John	3, 5
DANDO	George Ernest	7	WILKINS	Thomas	5
DIX	Jonah	5	WORTH	Rev. William	2
EMERY	Thomas	4	YOUNG	A.	4
EMERY	Mrs.	4	YOUNG	Enos	5, 8
EVANS	Alfred	6	YOUNG	Matthew	6, 9
EVANS	George	6, 9			
EVANS	John	5, 9	Also mentioned:		
EVANS	Joseph	3	Ken BIGGS (Contractors) Ltd		10
EVANS	Thomas	4	SWEETLAND Organ Building Co.		6
FEAR	Mr.	8	WARWICK Earl of		8
FLOWER	Miss Flora	4			
FORD	John	4, 6, 7, 9, 10			
FORD	Mrs.	4			
FROST	Rev. G.L.	6			
GAIT	Mr.	5, 7			
GARD	Miss Eva	4			
GARD	Timothy	4, 6			
GREGORY	Josiah	2			
GRIFFITHS	Rev. D.C.	4			
HALL	James	3, 5			
HALL	Mary	3			
HEAL	Arthur	6			
HEAL	Herbert	4, 5, 9			
HEAL	Moses	8			
HEAL	W.J.	8			
HEDGES	George	4, 6, 8, 9			
HEDGES	H.	4, 5			
HEDGES	Julia Annie	6, 10			
HEDGES	William	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9			
HOPWOOD	Rev. Henry S.	3, 5			
HULME	Rev. T. Ferrier	4, 6			
KENNARD	Matilda	4			
KNOWLES	Rev. John	5, 9			
LAWRENCE	Rev. G. Henry	6			
LEWIS	W.B.	6			
MAGGS	Arthur	4			
MAGGS	Gilbert	4, 5, 9			
MAGGS	Gilbert Reginald	6, 10			
MAWER	Mr.	6			
PARFITT	Edward	2			
PAYNE	C.H.	4			

RECORDS

A Register for High Littleton Wesleyan Methodist Chapel is housed at Bristol Record Office (Reference 38785 HL/1) and covers Baptisms from 1841 to 1955. This has been transcribed and indexed. It is not known whether any baptisms were recorded before 1841.

The next Baptism Register from 1956 to 1988 is also at Bristol Record Office (Reference DABR022, Acc 40690).

There was no separate Methodist Burial Ground and burials took place in the Churchyard of High Littleton Parish Church, with a Methodist Minister officiating in most instances.

Marriages until fairly recent times were also celebrated at the Parish Church.

Trustees' Minutes 1893 to 1950 are at Bristol Record Office (32078/HL/M).

Collection Journal 1933 to 1947 is at Bristol Record Office (32077/PV).

Michael L. Browning