

KNAPTON
CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF METHODISM
1890 TO 1990
(A Short History compiled by Herbert S. Hicks)

The Methodist Church in Knapton began in a barn. It formed part of a small holding and was adjoined to a farm cottage. For a time the barn was used for a carpenter's shop.

In 1880 a retired minister, Rev. E.S. Shields, bought the building and adjoining cottage. He came to live in the cottage, turning the barn into a chapel. He made a connecting doorway and had the place registered for worship: licence No. 25155.

We have no record of what happened in the next ten years.

In the year 1890 the North Walsham Primitive Methodist Circuit hired the buildings and began organising services. A rent of £2 per year was paid. The minister's name was Rev. I. Buck. The circuit contributed 15/- per quarter to help the society get started:

In 1896 Rev. G.W. Hancock became minister. The records show that coal was 1/2d per cwt. Oil for the lamps was 9d per gallon. There was an open fire-place in the south wall.

It appears that services were discontinued in 1902, but someone carried on paying the rent.

In 1916 the chapel re-opened. A new head teacher, name of Miss Carpenter, came to the school house, with her mother. They were keen to have services re-started.

Also a Mr Scott came to lodge in the village. He was a nonconformist and he offered to be treasurer. Rev. Joshua Biggs was now minister. The tile brick floor was scrubbed, the walls whitewashed, the windows painted; new matting was put in, the organ tuned, a new notice board fitted, a new Sankey hymn book bought. Special services were arranged for the opening day, with teas provided. The collections and tea brought in £111.15.0.

1921 was a very exciting year. The property, including the cottage, came up for sale. The society bought it for £165. Rev. H. Bennett (superintendent minister) loaned half the money @ 5%.

Many events were arranged to raise the money. A Sunday collection at about this time was: afternoon 1/6d, evening 1/10d. A great event called a "Sale of Work" was put on on the meadow, now called Lawn Close. The ladies had stalls of garments, home-made jams, etc.

The men brought gifts from their allotments. Many local chapels supported, including Trunch (I came with my mother. I was 8 years old). It was a wonderful success. £70 was raised.

The annual income from the cottage was 2/3d per quarter. The property was insured for 3/6d per year.

In the next few years several special services were arranged: Services of Song, Musical Evenings, Lantern Lectures, Entertainments, Tea Meetings, etc. Among those who came to help were: Trunch Christian Endeavour, Mundesley Wesleyans, Roughton Primitives, Mundesley Free Church, Witton Primitives, North Walsham Salvation Army, Paston Chapel, and North Walsham Wesleyans.

In 1923 a new pulpit Bible was bought for £5. More improvements were made to the building. A wooden porch was built inside the west wall. A wooden floor was laid, and a tortoise stove placed in the centre of the chapel. A new hymn board was also made.

Mrs Carpenter died in 1930. Her daughter, the Knapton School head teacher, with other members had a plate of remembrance placed on the east wall. It included several who had passed on to their reward during the previous few years: Georgina Wright, J.W. Scott, John Roberts, Janet Carpenter, William Watts, Philip Appleton.

By 1935 Knapton Methodists were able to contribute a little to the circuit (12 per quarter), as well as paying £5 per year off the loan.

In 1937 I married a Knapton member and came to live in the village. The Knapton Chapel was not then licensed for marriages. So we were married at the Wesleyan Chapel at Trunch by Rev. T. Featherstone. The new chapel at Trunch was being built, but was not complete.

I then transferred my membership from Trunch to Knapton, and Mr Featherstone asked me to become Trust treasurer and Sunday School superintendent. At that time there were five scholars and seven chapel members. There were no trustees living in Knapton. Most of the few still living were in North Walsham. Owing to the war none were present for the first three yearly meetings.

1944 brought many changes. The existing porch was built, the doorway to the adjoining cottage blocked off, and the inside wooden porch removed. At the disposal of the Trimmingham Chapel Knapton bought the seats. The pulpit was bought and given by two devoted members, Mr & Mrs James Bowman. The tortoise stove was removed and the seats fixed in place. Up to this time the seating arrangements consisted of four chairs, making up the front row, and five rows of wooden forms. These forms had one rail running along the back. So if you were very short or went to sleep you could fall through. A new entrance was built, with a brick arch. Owing to bomb damage during the war years the government paid out 8/- per year for five years.

A new trust was formed in 1945. This included more local persons, able to give better support and guidance.

About 1946 the Y.L.L. (Young Laymen's League) gave some special evening services. One of the results was that a newlywed young man became a member. For many years he and his wife, Mr & Mrs James Steward, were a great blessing. They brought all their family through the chapel and many of them still serve in other churches.

In 1947 electricity was installed, costing £17. In 1951 the water was laid on.

In 1955 we suffered the loss of a very gifted member, Mrs Iris Fawkes. Married in the chapel, she died at the age of only 23 years. Iris's former name was Carr. She had come through the Sunday School and become a teacher, serving also as President of the Women's Own, secretary to the Circuit Youth Council, and secretary to the Circuit Eisteddfod. Her husband presented an oak table, two chairs and the oak communion rail in her memory.

In 1960 the new schoolroom was build, where an old cart shed and stable had stood. (Preachers no longer came by horse and trap.)

Four years later an electric organ was purchased. In 1970 money was raised to buy a new oak pulpit to replace the old worm-eaten pine one. The pulpit was put in a corner position. A cross on the wall was given central place. Miss Mackenzie presented an oak screen, matching the communion rail, to

screen the organ. This she gave in memory of her father, Rev. F. Mackenzie. This completed the layout of the front of the church.

By 1979 the congregation had increased and the schoolroom was very much used by youth activities, committee meetings, Women's Own, Parish Council, Men's Fellowship, Parish Church Council meetings, etc. So it was felt that a kitchen and toilet were badly needed. We had no land around our buildings, but Mr & Mrs Hammond, local farmers, offered us, for a nominal fee, a small part of a garden from his cottage land adjoining our schoolroom at the north end of the chapel. We were very grateful for this kind gesture and began to plan ways and means to build.

It was estimated that the cost would be around £10,000. Fortunately we still owned the cottage at the south end of the chapel. It was in a deplorable condition and had been empty for some years. We decided to sell it and use the proceeds of sale. It made £6000.

To our delight it was bought by a young Methodist minister, Rev. L. Osborn, and his wife.

About this time we experienced some very severe weather. Water and snow came through the chapel roof and flooded the floor. The roof had to be re-tiled, the walls redecorated, and new carpet laid. Fortunately the insurance company shared the costs. This task completed, we focused our attention on building the kitchen and toilet. The project was finished in 1985 and we now find it most useful.

We have a very happy, loving fellowship our society today. There are twenty four members, six under 20 years old. There are fifteen children, Women's Own has 25 members, and Ken's Fellowship fifteen members. We have a monthly Prayer Circle, and regular united worship and other shared activities with our friends in the Parish Church.

We praise God for all that is past and trust that the future may be fruitful and bring glory to His Name.