

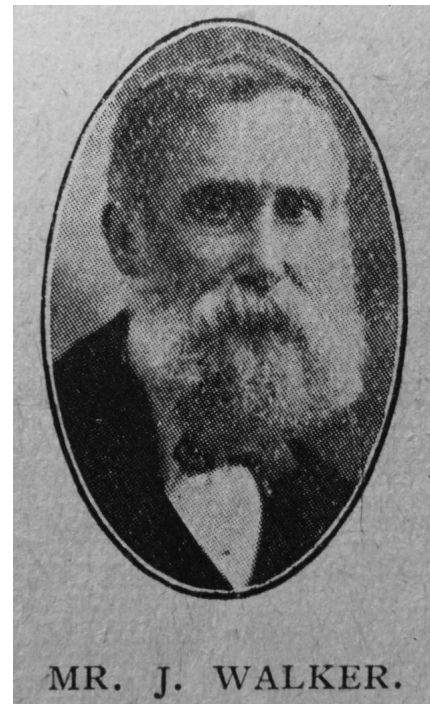
Primitive Methodism in Barnoldswick

Transcription of article published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Alfred G. Petty

WHILE, our soldiers were fighting on the fields of the Crimea, winning laurels for themselves and their regiments at Inkermann, and Balaclava, or being nursed back to health by Florence Nightingale and her devoted assistants, earnest and devout evangelists—men whose daily bread was won by exacting manual toil and muscular exertion—were endeavouring to start a Primitive Methodist cause in this town, or rather village as it was at that time. Giving freely of their spare time, they visited and missioned the place from Burnley and Colne, and the neighbouring villages, and taking their stand in the open air they proclaimed the gospel and exhorted the people to repent and seek salvation.

One of these pioneers was a local preacher from Barley, a village wide of Colne. A farmer by occupation, he often reached the “mission station” in boots which bore traces of the stable and the shippon. His “suit” consisted of knee breeches, a low vest, and a swallow-tailed coat. His hat was hand-made. A white tie completed his ministerial “rig out.” Some time later when the young Church had commenced to worship indoors, this worthy farmer had the honour of being the first to occupy the second-hand pulpit which had been purchased in a neighbouring village and triumphantly installed in the meeting-room. But the pulpit was high and the ceiling was low, and there was not sufficient room between the two to accommodate the six feet two inches that separated the crown of his head from the soles of his feet, and so he delivered his message leaning over the book-board in the attitude of a school boy about to be birched.

Prominent among these pioneers also, was Mr. John Hartley of Colne, father of the present-day stalwart of Primitive Methodism—Sir W. P. Hartley. He was the first superintendent of the Sunday school, and for several months he walked over from Colne every Sunday—a distance of nearly five miles—to conduct the service in the school, trudging back again to Colne when the service was over. Yet another person to whom the infant Church was greatly indebted was a woman, grandmother of the Rev. J.W. Lancaster. She had been a member of our Connexion at Gisburn, a village about four miles west of Barnoldswick. But this society was disbanded in 1830, and thus deprived of the means of communion in her own village; she walked from Gisburn to Salterforth every Sunday to attend our meetings there. This meant a return journey of at least twelve miles. Some time later she removed to Barnoldswick, and her “pilgrimage” was thereby reduced by about eight miles. One wonders where we to-day could find such devotion and zeal as was seen in the case of Mr. Hartley and Mrs. Lancaster. Methinks if such there be they must exist in places where the shrill whistle of the locomotive is never heard, where trams are not, and motors are well-nigh unknown. Travelling facilities have made cowards of us all.



Interested in starting a cause in the town where she was residing, Mrs. Lancaster joined with enthusiasm in the efforts that Mr. Hartley and his fellow-workers were putting forth. Along with a few friends in 1855 she rented a small room over the "Engine," the village beerhouse, situated where the Railway Hotel stands to-day. This was the cradle of Primitive Methodism here, but it was soon discarded as the owner would not permit a Sunday school to be held there, and the ambitions of the young Church were developing in that direction.

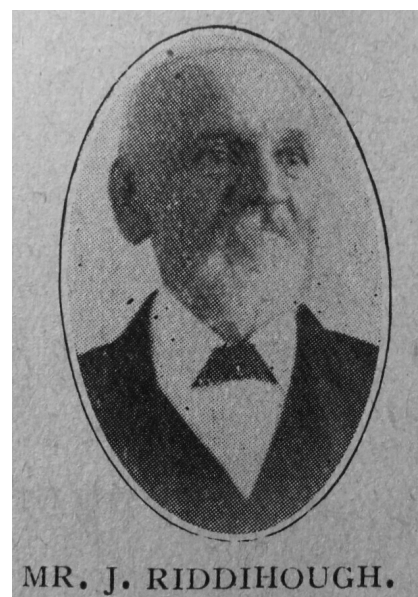
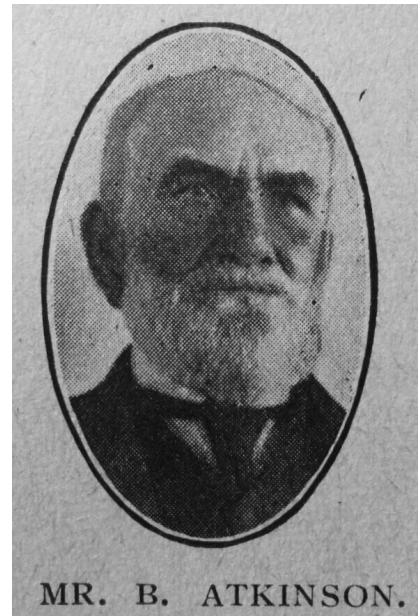
They next secured an "upper room" in a part of the village still called Newtown—certainly a misnomer now whatever it was then. Here the first pulpit was fixed which has been already referred to, and here a Sunday school was started.

The cause prospered and new members were obtained. Mr. James Whitaker came with his family to live in the village, and he relieved Mr. Hartley of his onerous duties as superintendent. In time a choir was formed and not before it was wanted, as they possessed no musical instrument to accompany the singing. On one occasion a good brother was thoughtless enough to select three long metre hymns for one service. Unfortunately the faithful few were only acquainted with one long metre tune, and this tune had to do duty for each hymn. The short-sightedness of the preacher on this occasion earned for him the sobriquet of "Three long metres" which was applied to him ever afterwards.

At last it was thought advisable to build a more convenient place for meetings and worship. In 1858, the largest landowner in the district—Mr. W. Bracewell, who was a member of the Wesleyan Church — was approached, and he generously gave them the site for their new venture. Building operations were commenced in July and the foundation stone was laid by the Rev. John Hedley. The opening services were conducted in May 1859. This building cost about three hundred pounds. At the "opening" on the Sunday night, the chapel was crowded, and in the prayer this petition was offered: "Lord, bless the man who gave us the ground for this chapel, and oh! Lord, open his heart and open his pocket." Mr. Bracewell happened to be just inside the door and heard this petition, and answered it by putting three pounds into the collection box that night and subscribing twenty pounds the next day.

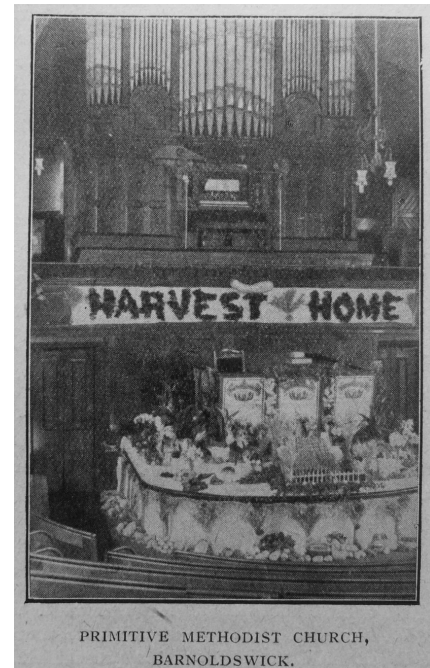
In 1864 and 1865 industrial prosperity in the village brought a large influx of residents and amongst them were several Primitive Methodist families. This promised well for the progress of the Church, but there were storms ahead.

Some time afterwards differences among the members caused a serious split, and out of the seven local preachers who were at that time directly connected with the church, five went elsewhere. Of the adherents and workers only three, or, four



men and about half a dozen ladies remained. Two-thirds of the scholars severed their connection also, only about forty continuing to attend the Sunday school. Success, however, came their way again, and modesty after a time began to put on ambition once more. They discovered that the chapel was in a back street, that its accommodation was becoming unequal to their needs, and that the cause was worthy of better and more accessible premises.

Mr Bracewell was approached again and this time was asked to sell the site of the present church. After ascertaining that seven hundred square yards would satisfy their needs he kindly offered it to them as a gift, which they gratefully accepted. This offer came as a great surprise to the deputation who waited upon him, and there and then in the donor's house they went down upon their knees, while the Rev. T. Markwell, who was one of the deputation, offered up a prayer of thanksgiving. Not content with the assistance he had already rendered them, Mr. Bracewell attended every one of the opening services and contributed forty pounds to the collections.



The building of the schoolroom which is underneath the chapel was commenced in 1878, and this was completed and opened in 1879, but considerable delay was experienced with the chapel itself, on account of difficulties with the contractor, and it was not finished until September 1880. A debt of seventeen hundred pounds proved a serious incubus to a society composed entirely of working-people. In 1884 a bazaar was held, and with the help of Sir W.P. Hartley, who as "opener" on the first day promised to add ten per cent. to the proceeds, and one hundred and fifty pounds from the General Chapel Fund, the debt was reduced to one thousand pounds. Hard times were in store again, and industrial strife in the town brought about a serious loss of supporters. Not only this, but one or two serious items of expenditure had to be met at different times, and the debt for a considerable time was not appreciably reduced below the figure already mentioned. This condition of things obtained until 1906 or 1907.

Up to this time it had been a somewhat isolated off-set of the Nelson Circuit. The Conference of 1907 agreed that it should in future be a branch of the Nelson Circuit, and appointed the Rev. J.W. Pattinson as a resident minister here during his probation. This inaugurated another period of progress which has continued ever since. His four years' stay with us was marked by both spiritual and financial prosperity. A mission was started in Earby, a town about two miles away, and a site for a new church was purchased at a cost of three hundred pounds.

It had been long felt that a pipe organ, suitable in size for the chapel, was urgently needed to assist in the service of praise. But with the debt already so large the prospect of a substantial increase was a responsibility which no one felt disposed to incur. Consequently a small American organ, continued to do duty at all the services. But the need was becoming more and more urgent as the congregations increased. In January 1910 it was decided to shoulder the additional burden and deal with it as best we could. A committee consisting of the trustees and other workers and friends, was

appointed to make the necessary arrangements. This committee, at its first meeting, decided to take upon itself the entire responsibility until the organ should be paid for, without letting it increase the debt for which the trustees were already responsible. The accounts were to be kept quite separate, a special account being opened at the bank, and special services on behalf of this fund were to interfere as little as possible with the usual contributions to the Trust Fund. Messrs. Laycock and Bannister of Crosshills were entrusted with the work of organ building. They were urged to complete their task so that the instrument could be "opened" before the departure of the Rev. J.W. Pattinson, in 1911, in honour of his devotion, energy, and success amongst us. This was accomplished, and the strains of the new organ contributed to the dignity and solemnity of the service in which he relinquished single for double bliss, Mrs. Pattinson being a native of Barnoldswick. The entire cost — including the alterations to the chapel in order to accommodate it—amounted to five hundred and twenty pounds, and this was subscribed in just under two years, and on the last Sunday of 1912 a surplus cheque for forty-five pounds was handed over to the Trustees.

At the Conference of 1911 Barnoldswick and Earby were constituted an independent circuit, and the Rev. J. E. Woodfield was appointed to take charge thereof. His ministry, too, was blessed and the increase in membership was maintained during the four years he spent here. He was succeeded by the Rev. E. de J. Horne, who after one year's stay carried away with him many happy memories and the good wishes of numerous friends from both within and without the Church, on his appointment as Chaplain to His Majesty's Forces. His father— Rev. J.T. Horne—although on the retired list then took the helm, and with experienced hands steered the ship for another twelve months, but age and physical considerations compelled him to relinquish the task, which otherwise he was so well fitted to undertake. Then the Rev. A. Eyre forsook his well-earned retirement and came to us for two years, and has just left to take up work elsewhere. Devoted and earnest as ever, he has often surprised us by the energy he has shown for one of his years, both in preaching and visiting, and his ministry too, will be gratefully remembered by many of us.

Sir W.P. Hartley has not yet lost sight of the work whose initiation was so largely due to the instrumentality of his father. In common with the other churches in the district which formed one circuit in his boyhood days, he has for the last four years given ten per cent on the amount by which the chapel debt has been reduced. Now he has offered twenty per cent on the reduction during the next three years up to a limit of three hundred pounds. The greater part of this has already been promised, so that it seems to be fairly certain that the church will benefit from his generosity to the extent of sixty pounds.

Among the members who still meet with us, are some who have borne the heat and burden of the day, and who have been spared to see the more prosperous days of the present time. Among these may be mentioned Mr. Broughton Atkinson who first joined the Church sixty-three years ago. He was one of the first trustees and still acts in that capacity though his connection has not been unbroken as he had to leave the town and reside elsewhere for eleven years. Mr. John Riddihough celebrated his jubilee of unbroken membership a few years ago. Mr. John Walker along with his father and brother joined the Church on their advent to the village in 1866. Possessed of wonderful energy and vitality Mr. Riddihough's name still appears on the Circuit Plan, but advancing age has obliged Mr. Walker to cast his mantle on to younger shoulders.

One cannot conclude this article without some reference to the great world-tragedy which has affected our Church as it has every other. We have at the present time on the Roll of Honour of the Society at Barnoldswick over a hundred names. Eight of our number have laid down their lives in the great struggle, many: have been wounded, some discharged from the army, no longer physically fit for its demands, and one or two are prisoners in Germany. Monthly letters are sent out to those who are serving either at home or abroad, and this is keeping them in touch with the Church.

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1918/694