

Great Horton Church, Bradford

from the series Notable Primitive Methodist Churches

The Aldersgate Primitive Magazine September 1924 pp 604-608

IN the year 1821, Great Horton was a village two miles from the centre of Bradford. The Rev. John Coulson, then stationed at Leeds, was the missionary who began our work in the locality, holding



GREAT HORTON CHURCH.

open—air meetings in the summer of that year. A barn-house was hired for the winter, and a society formed, consisting of eleven members. Then the upper room of a cottage in Southfield Lane was secured, and by 1824 the Society had grown to forty members. In that year a plot of land was purchased, on which the church now stands, and the foundation stones of the building were laid on January 22nd 1825. Thus the church is completing its first century of existence, and it is a fitting time to review the past. At various times the structure has been enlarged and improved, and to—day it is a substantial building with large and well-appointed schools behind the church. The latter were built in 1860, Sunday school work previously having been conducted in rooms underneath the church. Additions were made to the school in 1865 and again in 1868. A day school was established in the last-named year, and on the advice of the Rev. W. Antliff, Mr. William Johnson was brought from Allendale to be the first schoolmaster. Several others also came with Mr. Johnson — stalwart Primitive Methodists from the North — and their influence and the influence of their-families has been a potent factor in the growth of service in the years since their

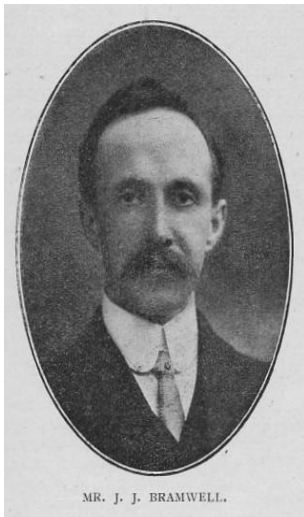
advent.

The church building is not large—its seating capacity is five hundred and fifty—but it is very comfortable and homely, and is the home of numerous organisations, which touch life at many points. One-time scholars are to be found all over the globe, and when Mr. Joseph Wilson's re-union gatherings are held, tributes to the gracious influences of the church and school come from far and near. It has been well served by its ministers and ministers find a loyal and helpful people.

Great Horton Church has long been characterised by its special care for its young people, and by the prominence it has given to temperance work. The Sunday school has always received the best the Church could give. The Primary Department, conducted by Miss R. A. Johnson from its inception, is one of the very best. The Boys' Brigade has a splendid leader in Captain Oscar Sunderland, and for several years has won the highest honours of the Bradford Battalion. Better still, and more to the joy of the captain, is the fact that nearly every boy is, by definite decision, a member of the Church. This also is true of the Primary Department teachers and helpers. Men's and women's Bible Classes have a membership of nearly two



GREAT HORTON SCHOOLS.

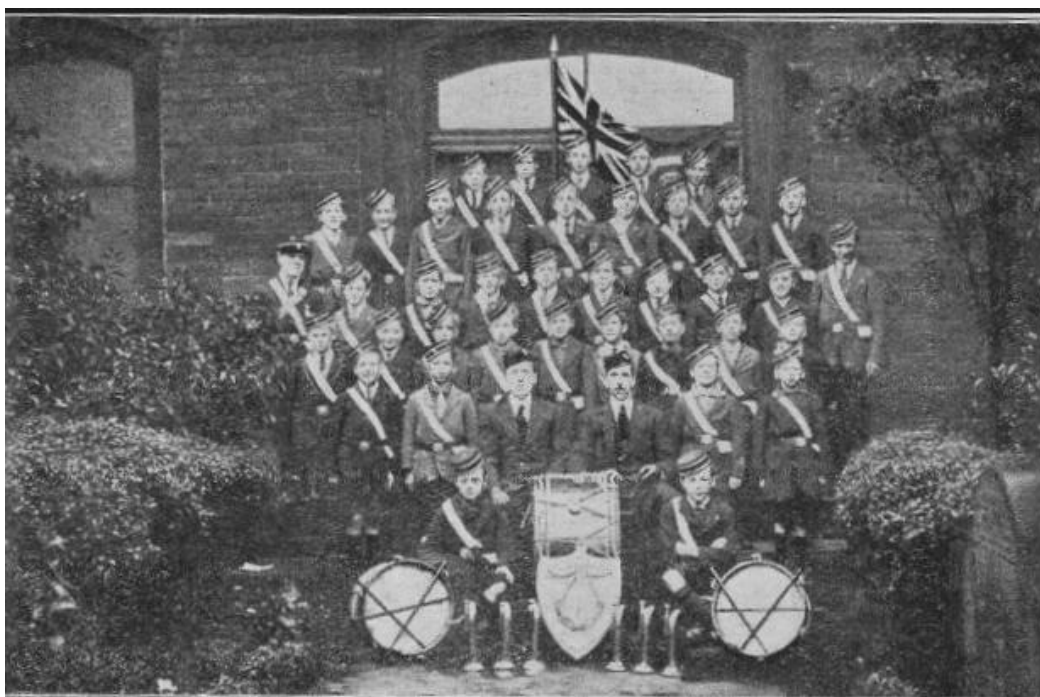


MR. J. J. BRAMWELL.

hundred, and are a source of great power. The recreational side of the school life is well catered for, and men's and ladies' institutes are provided and largely used. The Band of Hope has the largest individual society membership in Bradford and District Union. A cricket club, photographic club and similar organisations also are to be numbered among the branches of service.

The public worship is greatly helped by a good choir, with Mr. J. J. Bramwell as the organist. This position he has filled for a long term of forty three years. For many years he has also been the choir-master.

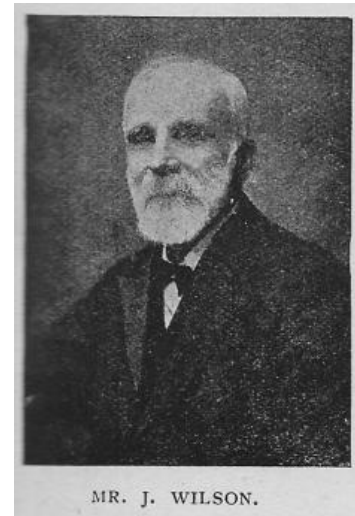
In the last three years there has been an accession to the membership of the church of more than a hundred. Every quarter the Sacramental Service, with its reception of new members is eagerly anticipated. This is "hand-picked" fruit—the quiet in-gathering of elder scholars by personal evangelism, and the spiritual life of the Church has been graciously enriched and the workers inspired.



9TH BRADFORD CO., BRADFORD BATTALION, BOYS' BRIGADE, GREAT HORTON.

The century of service has greatly influenced the life of the neighbourhood. Numerous families are within the sphere of influence of our Church, and are proud of the fact. Strong characters have been moulded by its life and teaching, and its light has shone brightly and steadily all through the years. The history of the work done does not reveal sensational periods, nor does it reveal any violent eruptions. It has always been blessed by loyal and devoted souls who have given their best to strengthen its witness to the power of grace.

Foremost among the devoted Sons of the Church is Mr. Joseph Wilson. Now completing his ninety-first year, practically all his life he has been associated with our Great Horton Society, sharing in all its fields of service, but especially Siday School and Band of Hope. He was for fifty years the teacher of the Ladies Class and kept a register of every member, with address, birthday and family changes. Photos of over one hundred of these members, framed, are amongst his most treasured possessions. He has kept up a system of birthday letter writing and still enjoys this useful ministry. For twenty eight years he conducted a Gospel Temperance Mission in Great Horton and many were won for Christ and Temperance through his work there. This meant that his active service for Great Horton Church was lost for most of these years, but his connection continued. At the end of 1922 this form of activity ceased and fifteen members of the Mission accompanied him to his former scene of labour. Strong, kindly and generous his power has been mightily felt in his "parish". His brother Cephas was an unbroken connection with the men's class of sixty-six years.



MR. J. WILSON.

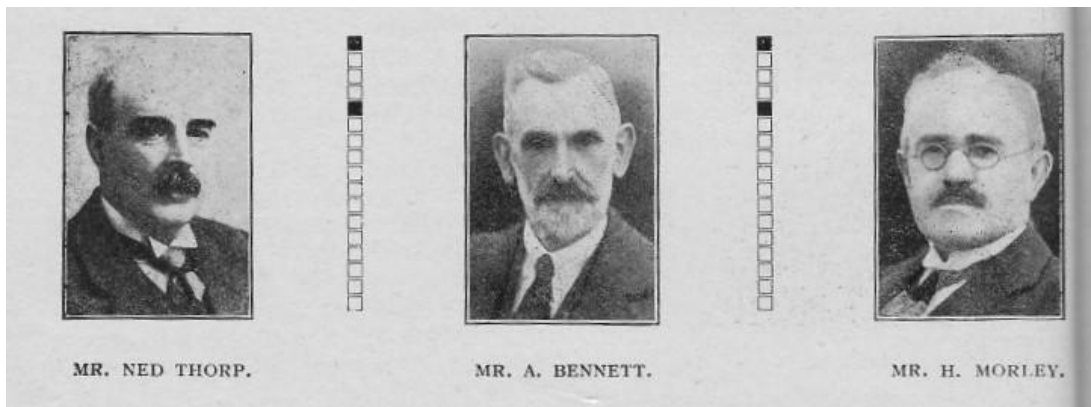


MRS. BEANLAND.

The record of length of membership of the church is held by Mrs. Mary Beanland, who with great pride displays her first class-ticket, dated August, 1852. She still delights in the services, and is present as often as health permits. Her husband was a trustee, and her son, Mr A.W. Beanland, is trust secretary, and a leader of the Men's Class.

The Thorp family have been among the most devoted for a good part of the church's history, and Mr. Ned Thorp is the honoured circuit steward. Mr. Arthur Bennett has been long in service, and none enjoys service more than he. For nearly thirty years he was school superintendent, is society steward and class leader, and in every possible way he has been a faithful Epaphroditus to his Church. Mr. Torn Brown, his co-steward, is quiet, but always there. Mr. Herbert Morley is general treasurer and school superintendent; his wife is president of the Ladies' Committee; and their family is a model of devotion. Their sons, Cyril and Laurence, have won scholarships from elementary school to Lincoln College, Oxford, and both are local preachers. Mr. W. Oswald is school secretary, and his business acumen is revealed in his church work.

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MR. NED THORP.

MR. A. BENNETT.

MR. H. MORLEY.

Missionary interest runs high, and Connexional claims are joyfully met. It is a church with a wide outlook, a generous spirit, and loyal to the core. The church is the proud mother of two flourishing causes, both housed within a mile of the parent society. Horton Bank, after fifty-two years of witness, has a membership of one hundred and twenty-four, with large Sunday school, and activities branching out in every direction. Dirkhill, a later child, is most successful, and contributes equally with Great Horton to the Circuit Fund. During the five-years' term of the Rev. Sam Davis (completed last Conference) advance has been most marked. That work is being continued under the Rev. Arthur Bilsborough, who after four years of splendid work on the circuit, has taken over the charge of Dirkhill.

Great Horton and its daughters are busy now with Centenary celebrations, and all the signs point to a larger ministry still as it enters upon its second century full of vigorous life.

Transcribed by Christopher Hill March 2024