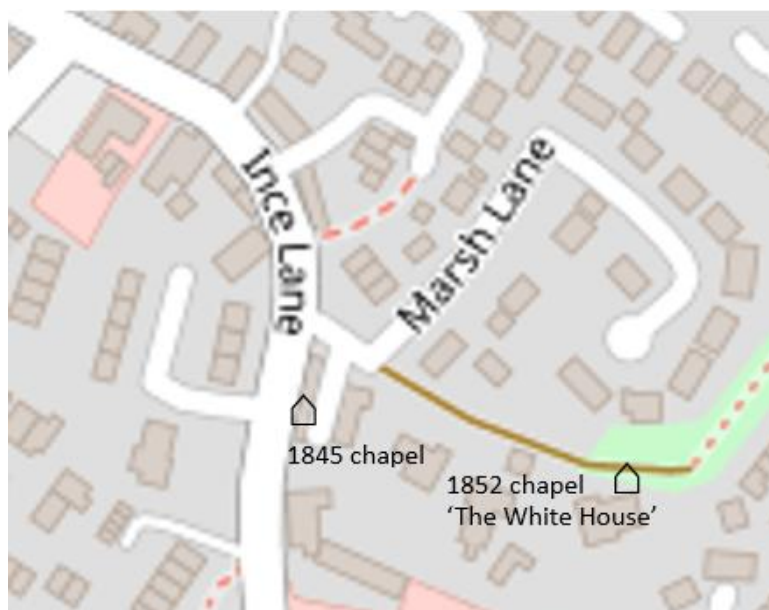


# Elton Primitive Methodist chapel

Supplementary Information to [MPM](#):



Acknowledgement: OpenStreetMap

*Yes, the above information relates to the correct Elton, about 6½ miles (straight line) NE of Chester. And yes, there are two different chapels.*

In 1870-72, John Marius Wilson's [Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales](#) listed eight places in England named Elton, including two in Cheshire. The name probably derives from 'eel-farm'. It described Elton like this:

'Elton, a township in Thornton-le-Moors parish, Cheshire; adjacent to the Hooton to Helsby railway, near the river Mersey, 4 miles WSW of Frodsham. ... Pop., 190. Houses, 37. There are chapels for Wesleyans [?] and Primitive Methodists [the 1845 chapel].'

*The mystery can be largely resolved* by reference to a pamphlet 'Elton Methodist Chapel – A Short Account' by Peter H. Allan, published in 1995 as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1845 chapel. The author says that 'Much of our information regarding the chapel in the last [ie, 19<sup>th</sup>] century comes from the Centenary Souvenir produced by the Primitive Methodist Church in the Chester area in 1919'.

According to the Allan pamphlet:

## **Elton Primitive Methodists up to 1860**

**1832:** 'Our Elton [PM] Society originated in the year 1832 ....' (see above)

**1838:** '... and first appears on the plan in 1838. Services were held in the house of Mrs Joinson, and great power attended them.'

**1841:** The Census showed that Mrs Hannah Joynson [45] lived at Glebe House with her husband John, 40, basketmaker [baskets for the fishermen], and their four children.

**1852:** ‘This house-church was the starting-point for the Marsh Lane chapel, known as the White House, which opened in 1852.’ It was built for £86 10s 5d, £36 having been collected and £50 having been borrowed from Mary Podmore at 5% pa. interest with the chapel as security. This building can be seen on the [1897 25” OS map](#), about 100 yards down Marsh Lane on the right, just before the left turn. It scales at about 20 feet square.



*‘The White House’ taken c. 1968 shortly before demolition. A dark wooden porch has been built over the central door and outhouses can be seen on the lower left*

### **Elton Wesleyan Methodists up to 1860**

**1840:** ‘Meanwhile the Wesleyan Methodists had begun meeting in the village, with a class membership of six in 1840.’

**1845:** ‘Five years later they opened their own chapel – our present building – probably purpose built.’ It can be seen on the [1897 25” OS map](#) and scales at about 31 feet x 18 feet. It was probably built at the same time as the adjoining barn.

**1850:** ‘By 1850 Wesleyan membership here had increased to eight ...’

### **Elton Primitive Methodists from 1860**

**1860:** ‘... but ten years later it [Wesleyan membership] was down to two. It was clearly time for change.’

‘After a lapse of a few years the Wesleyan Methodists sold their chapel to our people for £152. The chapel was built in 1845, but 1860 was the year of possession by the Primitives. ... The original chapel [the White House] was converted into a dwelling house [and continued as such until it was demolished in about 1968]. ... The opening service .. was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1860.’ The old chapel was sold for £15 and the new one purchased for £85, with a loan of £65 from Mr J Worrall. It is believed to have had a beaten earth floor and benches without backs.

In 1858 the Wesleyans had opened a new chapel (‘Zion Chapel’) in Helsby (about 2 miles east); perhaps the remaining Wesleyans moved their allegiance there. That chapel is still active today (2023).

**1867:** The chapel was listed in the [1867 List of Places for Public Religious Worship, Cheshire](#) No. 33 in the Great Boughton Registration District, with the note ‘Formerly Wesleyan’

**1882:** The [Q4 Chester First Circuit Preaching Plan](#) shows the [chapel in George Street](#) (the 1862/3 chapel) as the head of the circuit, and eleven other ‘Places’ including Elton. Mr T White [1820 – c. 1888] was the Elton Society Steward. There were weekly Sunday services at 2.30pm and 6pm both taken by the same lay preacher (by the superintendent minister one week during the quarter). The two circuit ministers took it in turns to lead meetings in the chapel on alternate Tuesdays at 7pm.

**1883:** The trustees paid two builders £58 15s. 4½d for chapel renovation, and purchased a new stove, hat pegs and a harmonium.

**1887-93:** There is an interesting link between the chapel and the building of the Manchester Ship Canal during this period. The Canal passes just over a mile north of Elton. The average construction workforce was about 12,000 navvies sub-divided to work on the eight sections of the canal. Some of these workers were housed in temporary wooden huts. One hut near Ince (which lies about ¾ mile north-west of Elton) was set aside as a Mission Hut for church services and relaxation; it was set out with finely worked pews and a pulpit made by joiners in the garrison at Chester Castle.

During the canal's construction there was a tragic accident; on 23 July 1891, a railway engine came off the rails and fell onto where some men were taking a break; ten of them were killed. Their bodies were taken to Ince where their funerals were held in St James' Church; seven were then buried in the churchyard. When construction work was completed, the company offered its Mission Hut pews and pulpit to St James' Church by way of a thank-you. The church had no



used for them but suggested that they be offered to Elton PM Chapel, who gratefully accepted. Their installation must have

*Chapel interior: behind the organ (left) and piano (right) are the communion rail and doors to inward-facing choir pews (two on each side, each holding 4-5 singers). Behind the communion rail are the communion table and raised pulpit*

made a big improvement to the chapel. When the chapel closed in 2010, the pulpit was donated to the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port where it is now displayed.

**1894:** The [Q3 Chester First Circuit Preaching Plan](#) is very similar to that of 1882 Q4 given above except that the head chapel would have been the [new George Street chapel](#) built in 1888 and the chapels in Ellesmere Port, Whitby, Pool Town and Dunham had become the new Ellesmere Port Circuit. Mr J White [1845-1920] (son of Mr T White) was the Society Steward.

**1895:** 'It was not until September 1895 that the loan used to purchase the chapel [from Mary Podmore] was finally repaid.'

**1940:** The chapel was listed in the [1940 Methodist Church Buildings Report](#) Districts 'C', Circuit 396 Chester (George Street). The following information was provided:

Elton: made of brick; seating 75; pews; no hall or other rooms.

**1970:** ‘oversight of our chapel was transferred from Chester Circuit to the Ellesmere Port Circuit.’

**1972:** ‘The Ellesmere Port Circuit was subsumed into the new South Wirral Circuit.’

**1982:** The adjoining barn was demolished and replaced by three maisonettes (it looks as though the old bricks were reused on the Ince Road side).



*May 1982*

**1984:** ‘The chapel was extended with kitchen and toilets, at a cost of £13,863.’ This extension can be seen on modern photographs to the right of the chapel (with black double-doors).

**1990:** A major refurbishment of the chapel interior was carried out.

**1995:** On 2 June an Ecumenical Covenant was signed between the Methodist Chapel and the Anglican church in Ince (St James’, Thornton-le-Moors with Ince and Elton).

**2010:** The chapel closed on 31 August but the Anglican-Methodist Ecumenical Partnership continues to the present day (2023). The chapel building was sold for about £34,000; it has been converted for residential use, including an upstairs, but is currently (2023) being used as a recruitment agency office.

That just leaves the matter of the date stone. There may or may not have been a stone labelled WESLEYAN METHODISTS installed when the chapel was first built. Presumably, when the Prims took over in 1860, they had the current stone installed to avoid confusion.

I am indebted to Rob and Kathleen Nightingale for the photographs and contributions to this write-up. Kath née Edwards and her sister Ruth (Elton Chapel organist 1949-65) were brought up in Elton; Kath was the Church Secretary from February 1962, Building Fund Treasurer from September 1965, Treasurer from 1991, Researcher for the 1995 pamphlet and ‘Church Link Person’ to the Circuit 2010-2019. She is daughter of Ernest George and Mary (née White) Edwards (1905-87 and 1905-94 respectively), grand-daughter of Thomas White (1879-1952), great-grand-daughter of Jonathan White (1845-1920) and great-great-grand-daughter of Thomas White (1820-c. 1888) who signed the 1860 Chapel Deed. All of these forebears were Society Stewards and multiple office-holders in the Chapel – what a long history of devotion and duty in one family.



*View towards the back of the chapel and the door through to the kitchen and toilets*

(2023) Kath Nightingale is about to donate the following to the Cheshire Archives;

- Three Treasurer's Account Books 1860-1904, 1905-2005 and 2005-2013;
- Two books of Minutes of Trustees Meetings 1943-1961 and 1962-2010.

They make fascinating reading.