

Wallasey: Seacombe Primitive Methodist Chapels (Poulton-cum-Seacombe)

According to [Kelly's 1850 directory](#), page 671:

‘WALLASEY, anciently called *Kirby in Walley*, is a parish comprising the townships of Wallasey, Liscard and Poulton-cum-Seacombe, the parish forms the north-west corner of the county, and is a peninsular of triangular form, bounded on the west by the Irish sea, and on the north-east by the Mersey.’

Then on page 674:

‘POULTON-CUM-SEACOMBE is a township, 1 mile south by east from Wallasey; in 1841 had 371 houses and 2,446 inhabitants. Population in 1801, 178; in 1831, 1212. SEACOMBE, the most populous part of the township, is situated on the banks of the Mersey, opposite Liverpool, and commands a striking view of that port and the shipping. The hotels and taverns afford every accommodation to the multitude of visitors brought over here by the steamers.’

I have not been able to find a definitive history of Primitive Methodism in this area; what follows has been pieced together from various sources.

First Society 1837 to mid-1850s?

1837: According to [History of Wallasey](#):

‘In 1837, a 17-year-old convert of Poulton, William Hughes, and some of his companions, began to hold prayer meetings in the neighbourhood. When these proved successful, they looked for a place for regular services and [in 1838] built a chapel.’

Is this chapel the one for which an [1851 Census Return](#) for Wallasey was made? It stated that the chapel was built in 1838; it held around 180 people, but the average attendance in 1851 was 15 in the Sunday morning service and 30 in the evening.

Furthermore, is this the chapel listed as Wallasey in the 1849 Preaching Plan mentioned in a [1923 booklet](#)?

The [1859 Q2 Preaching Plan](#) listed a chapel in Liscard but no others in the Wallasey area.

The Brighton Street Chapel 1865 to 1907

1865: The *Liverpool Daily Post* 19 February 1868 reported:

‘In 1865, a new Seacombe PM society was formed; they worshipped in ‘a wooden structure’.’

1868: The same newspaper report continued:

‘PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL IN SEACOMBE.

Yesterday afternoon, at half-past three o'clock, the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of a new chapel in connection with the Primitive Methodist Society took place, at Seacombe, in the presence of a considerable assembly. The Primitive Methodist Society at Seacombe forms part of a circuit, the head-quarters of which are in Birkenhead, and has been in existence about three years. It numbers 40 members, together with about 80 attendants at chapel. The circuit ministers are Revs. [T. Hindley](#) and [J. Hill](#). The society at Seacombe has for some time past worshipped in a wooden structure; but having secured an eligible piece of land, at the corner of Brighton-street and Pitt-street, is now engaged in building thereon a

permanent chapel, at a cost of £600, exclusive of the land. The plans have been designed by Mr Williams, of Seacombe, and embrace a chapel calculated to seat 400 persons, vestries, &c., and a Sunday School capable of accommodating 200 children. The building will be of brick with stone dressings. Mr. Geo. Dickinson, of Seacombe, is the contractor. The ceremony yesterday commenced with the singing of a hymn, after which the Rev. J. Hill read a portion of Scripture, and the Rev. T. Hindley engaged in prayer. The Rev. Mr. Ball, of Liverpool, then made an address, in which he enumerated the leading doctrines held and taught by the Primitive Methodists ...’

However, no Pitt Street has been found on maps of the time nor later ones; the only chapel and school shown on Brighton Street are at the south end on the northern side of Shaw Street (no denomination given); this map is no longer in the public domain. The chapel scales about 55ft x 35ft – rather small for 400 seats but perhaps there was a balcony. An [1898 6” map](#) shows the chapel as a black block indicating that it is not residential housing which is cross-hatched.

1869: The 1869 Q3 Preaching Plan for the Birkenhead Circuit (a copy of which was put in a time capsule under the foundation stone of [Grange Lane](#) chapel) showed the following Places: [Camperdown Street](#) (by implication the head of the circuit), [South Tranmere](#), Lower Tranmere, [Beckwith Street](#), Poulton[-cum-Spital], [Bebington](#), Seacombe and [Saughall](#). There were two Sunday services at Seacombe, at 10.30 and 6, led mostly by lay preachers apart for three or four visits per quarter from each of the two circuit ministers, [Rev T Swallow](#) and [Rev W Thornley](#). The chapel had two classes (there were 19 in the whole circuit). For a description of PM Classes see [here](#).

1879: The *Liverpool Mercury* of 10 January reported that the Seacombe Primitive Methodist choir took part in a charity fund-raising concert ‘for the relief of the destitute poor of Seacombe’.

1881: The 1881 Census lists a ‘Primitive Methodist Chapel and School’ on Brighton Street (possibly on the corner of Shaw Street) before the enumerator turned into ‘Primitive Terrace’ (not found on any map).

1883: [Slater’s Directory](#), Birkenhead section p. 64, lists four PM chapels: Beckwith St. & Grange Lane; [Holt Hill, Tranmere](#); and Brighton st S[eacombe].

1899: The [1899 Q2 Preaching Plan](#) for the Birkenhead Circuit shows seven ‘Places’: Grange Road, Mount Tabor (Tranmere), Beckwith Street, Poulton[-cum-Spital], Seacombe, [Irby](#) and West Kirby. The Seacombe society had seven members, the Society Steward was W. H. Miller, M.D., St Paul’s Road, Seacombe and the only weekly service was at 7.30 on Mondays taken by the two ministers alternating.

1900: Genuki lists a PM chapel in Brighton Street (location not stated) founded in 1900 and closed before 1928.

[Gore’s Directory 1900](#) for Liverpool and Birkenhead, p. 79, shows in the Street Directory for Brighton Street, Seacombe:

18 Edward Evans and Sons, ironmongers
Shaw st
Primitive Methodist Chapel & Schools
20 Hornby Henry grocer
22 Cheshire Furnishing Company
Tabor st

1902: Gore’s Directory contains the following:

BIRKENHEAD FIRST CIRCUIT:

Grange Road
Beckwith Street
Seacombe, Brighton Street
West Kirby, Eaton Road.

About 1905: The book 'Wallasey: the Postcard Collection' by Les Jones has a postcard of Brighton Street which 'shows the start of the street [southern end looking north] near its junction with Borough Road. ... [on the right a] small confectioner's shop is joined to the larger premises of Evans & Sons' ironmongery business. The gabled building beyond was a small chapel.' The Gore's 1900 Directory entry above confirms that Evans's and the PM chapel stood either side of the entry to Shaw Street. The ridge of the chapel is about the same height as the eaves of the three-story buildings on either side.

Early 1900s: The [History of Wallasey](#) states that early in the 20th century, the Prims leased buildings in Brighton Street from the Salvation Army for a PM chapel and school. This is confirmed by a [1908/9 25" map](#) which shows the Brighton Street/Shaw Street building labelled 'S.A. Hall'. I wonder whether, in about 1900, the society decided to build a new and larger chapel (see the next section); they sold their Brighton Street chapel to the Salvation Army to raise early funds but then leased the premises back until the new chapel was opened.

Shaw Street no longer exists. The site of the chapel is now occupied by a Car Wash at CH44 6QN.

The First Poulton Road Chapel and School 1907 to 1928

1907: A [1923 booklet](#) states 'Seacombe is a church with a future. The first church was erected in 1868 (as described above) and the 'school-church' was erected in 1907 in Poulton Road Seacombe at the junction with Northbrook Road.'

1908/9: A [1908/9 25" map](#) shows the new chapel's somewhat irregular outline, labelled 'Prim. Meth. Church'. The footprint scales about 60ft x 56ft. The 1923 booklet continues, '[the society] has a membership of over 300 and nearly 600 scholars and the main church building is being anticipated [this presumably refers to plans for the 1927/8 church – see below].' Apparently a dramatic growth in numbers! The society is listed under the Birkenhead No. 1 Circuit in the [1910 Kelly's Directory](#) lists on p.543 under Places of Worship:

'Primitive Methodist, Northbrook road (Birkenhead (First) Circuit), [Rev. John H. Johnson](#);
10.45am & 6.30pm.'

1925: A [1925 25" map](#) shows the same chapel but with a new building to the south scaling at 53ft x 24ft.

1935/6: The next [25" Map](#) shows that the chapel had been converted into a Sunday School and a new Chapel had been built on to it to the south, as will now be described.

The Second Poulton Road Chapel and School 1926 to 1941

About 1920: The [History of Wallasey](#) states: 'After World War One it was decided to open a new chapel. A site was obtained in Poulton Road, Seacombe, on the corner of Northbrook Road [this seems to be wrong – the Prims already had that site with the first chapel on it].'

1927/8: The [History of Wallasey](#) continues: 'The stone-laying ceremony [for a new chapel] was held on 21st May, 1927, and was laid by [Charles Wass Esq, J.P.](#), who was to become Vice President of the Primitive Methodist Church in 1930. The church opened for worship on 4th April, 1928, with the dedication service started by [Rev. J.H. Saxton](#) of Middlesborough.'



A [1935/6 25" map](#) shows what had happened. The 53ft x 24ft building mentioned in the 1925 entry above had been replaced with a new church built onto the south side of the 1907 chapel which had itself been converted into a Sunday School. The new church scaled at about 60 ft square.

1940: The listing of Methodist Buildings gives the statistics of this church: built of brick, seating for 600 in pews, and having three school halls and eleven other rooms.

1941: In March the church was destroyed during an air-raid (see image).

1944: The church was demolished.

Today

The site of the 1927/8 church and Sunday School now forms part of the grounds of Somerville Primary School which itself replaced Somerville Council Public Elementary School, built in 1892 for 350 boys, 350 girls, 500 mixed juniors and 334 infants.

The nearest three Methodist churches for this area are the Church @ the Cross in Tranmere (2½ miles south), Claremont Methodist in Wallasey (2 miles north-west) and St Andrew's United Church in New Brighton (2 miles north-north-west).