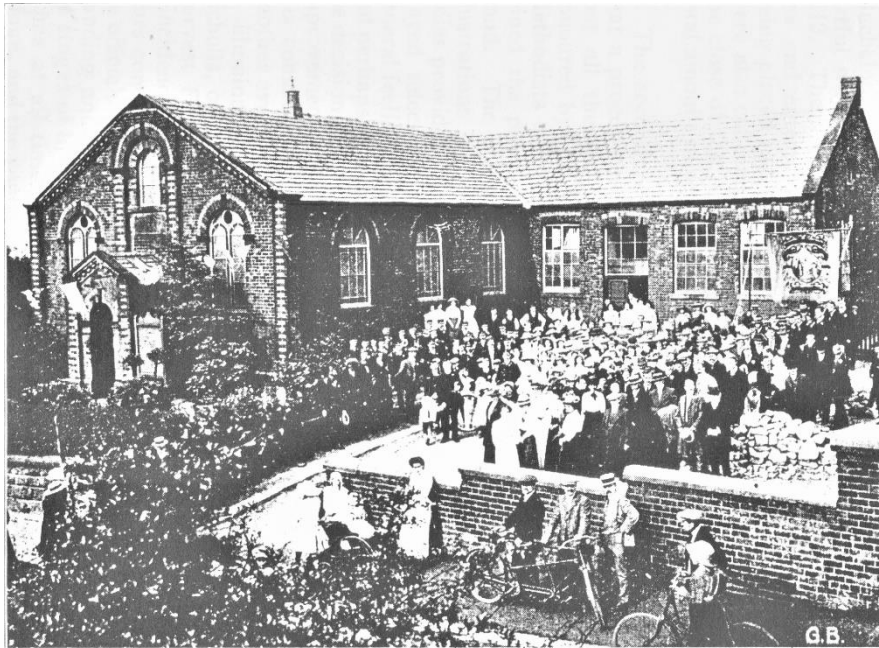


Bowlee Primitive Methodist chapel



(left) 'The Last Rally' and

(below) 'Members and Friends'

Both photographs from the booklet 'Primitive Methodist Church, Bowlee, Jubilee Souvenir and Historical Sketch 1914'



MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

This chapel lies 1½ miles west of Middleton, on Heywood Old Road about ¾ mile north of its junction with Manchester Old Road.

1863: From the *Centenary Souvenir pamphlet, 1834-1934*, of the Chapel Street Methodist Church, Rhodes, near Middleton, Lancashire (Middleton Library):

'In the Spring of 1863 a number of enthusiastic souls connected with the Primitive Methodist Church at Rhodes conceived the idea of a mission to the villagers living on the high lands of Bowlee. [They] commenced their work, first in the open air, and subsequently in a

cottage which was converted into a meeting room.'

This society first appears on the Preaching Plan for Manchester 1st Circuit in [1863 Q4](#), alongside Middleton (Irk Street) and Rhodes from the Middleton area. There were 10 'Places' in the circuit. The Sunday services were at 2.3pm and 6pm and

were led by a local preacher. The two ministers took turns at leading services on alternate Wednesdays at 7.30pm.

1864: (the *Centenary Souvenir pamphlet* continues) 'The following year these courageous evangelists found that they had established a cause, and this they consolidated by building a chapel.'

On Whit Thursday the foundation stone of the chapel was laid. 'Women and men worked with picks and spades to prepare the site' and the chapel was opened in October.

The *Heywood Advertiser* of 27 Aug 1864 reported:

'At the first Annual Meeting of the Heywood Town Mission, Mr Ashworth, one of the speakers, said: 'The Primitive Methodists had some time since opened a chapel at Bowlee, which seemed to be going on well. If they had another missionary or two, all these places could be visited. He always thought of Birch as a poor lost place [see 1886 below]. The great drawback there, as elsewhere, was drunkenness; and by having more men to go among the people and talk to them about their souls, a great amount of good might be done.'

The chapel building has a date-stone 'A.D. 1864' but it does not appear on old photos so is probably not original. The chapel can be seen on the [1891 25" OS map](#) labelled 'Methodist Chapel (Primitive)' and scales at about 34ft x 31ft.

1867: The Bowlee chapel appears on the [1867 List of Places for Public Religious Worship, Lancashire No. 15](#) (Oldham Registration District).

1869: The *Rochdale Observer* for 24 December reported on the 'OPENING OF A NEW ORGAN'.

1876: The Elementary Day School opened on 1 May. It can be seen on the [1891 25" OS map](#) lying across the rear of the chapel; the main part scales at about 55ft x 20ft.

1881: A lengthy report was given in the *Heywood Advertiser* of 9 December on the PRIMITIVE METHODIST BAZAAR AT BOWLEE:

'On Thursday morning a bazaar was opened ... for the purpose of raising funds to pay off the debt of £100, and also to provide means for alterations to the chapel. The little schoolroom was neatly decorated, and immediately over the platform hung the school flag bearing the emblem of "The Good Shepherd".'

There were four stalls selling ottomans, footstools, fancy teapots, purses, dolls and clothing; there was also a refreshments stall.

1884: From the *Manchester Evening News* of 22 September:

‘DISTURBING THE CONGREGATION.- During the progress of a service, yesterday afternoon, [at the chapel] ... several men in a state of intoxication entered the edifice and seated themselves in one of the pews. After the interval of a few minutes, they commenced to talk loudly to each other, causing some consternation the while amongst the congregation. The minister asked them to leave the chapel, and one of the deacons seconded the request, but they refused to move. One of them became excited, made use of improper language, and threatened violence if interfered with. By this time the chapel was a scene of great confusion, and it was not until the man referred to had been ejected that order was restored. He is now in the custody of the Middleton police.’

This incident and subsequent court appearances were widely report.

The *Heywood Advertiser* of 26 September reported on a tea-party and lecture at the chapel, ‘the object being the liquidation of the debt incurred in beautifying and improving the place.’

1886: According to the *Heywood Advertiser* of 19 March, the society had recently joined the Middleton Band of Hope Union.

The *Heywood Advertiser* of 15 October reported under news of MIDDLETON:

‘MISSION WORK AT BIRCH. – The Primitive Methodists of Bowlee have established a mission room at Birch [about 3/4 mile to the north-east] to increase religious work amongst the accumulating population in that neighbourhood. On Sunday, services were held on behalf of the object; in the afternoon at the Mission Room, and in the evening at Bowlee Chapel, which had been lent for the purpose.’

1889: The *Middleton Guardian* of 5 January reported that 200 sat down to tea at the annual congregational tea party; they were then entertained to a programme of songs, recitations, etc.

1891: From the *Middleton Guardian* of 16 May:

‘Primitive Methodist, Bowlee. – Founded 1864. Minister, [Rev. W. Goodman](#) ... Scholars - male 58, female 50, total 108; teachers – male 14, female 8, total, 22; books in library 120; Band of Hope, 59. Friday, trip to Scarboro’ with Sunday-school Union; procession through the village for sports on June 13th.’

1901: An infant room was added to the Elementary School.

1940: The chapel was listed in the [1940 Methodist Church Buildings Report Districts ‘M’](#), Circuit 825 Middleton. The following information was provided:

Bowlee: made of brick; seating 168; pews; one hall and two other rooms.

1956-61: Manchester Central Library holds the original Marriage Registers for 1956-61 (M275/1453/1).

1967: According to the [Manchester Archives](#) (GB127.M80/14), this is when the chapel closed ([Genuki](#) gives a closure date of 1969).

The chapel and schoolroom buildings still exist, having been converted into a private residence, No. 246, Heywood Old Road, M24 4GQ.