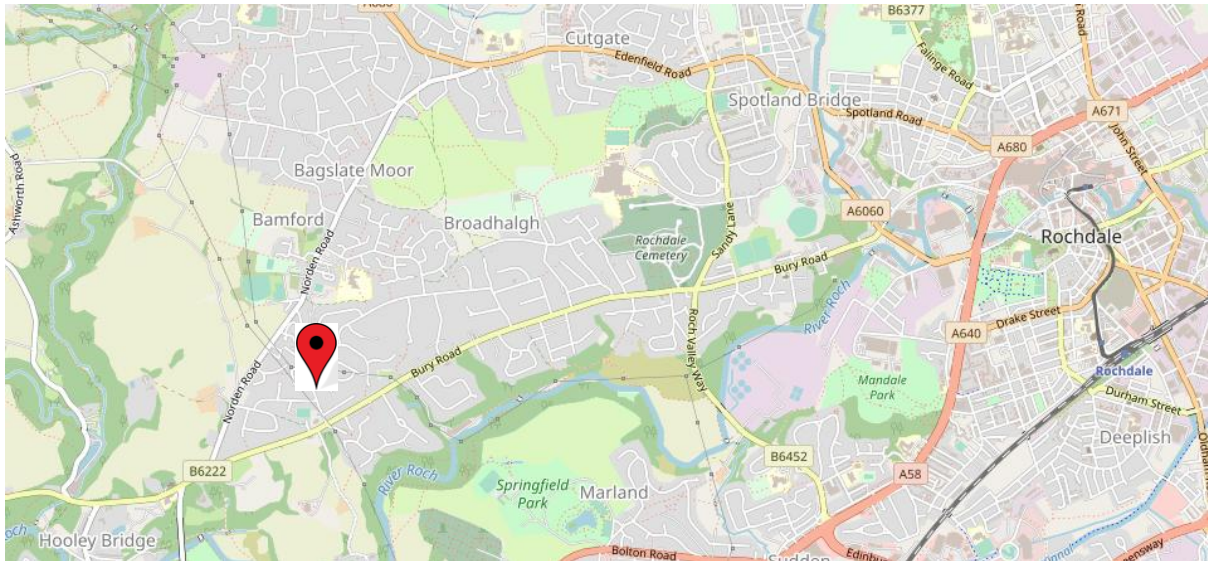


Bamford Primitive Methodist chapel near Rochdale



Bamford, part of Birtle-cum-Bamford, lies about 2 miles WSW of Rochdale town centre.

In 1870-72, John Manus Wilson's *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (in '[A Vision of Britain](#)') described Birtle like this:

'Birtle, a township, a chapelry, and a sub-district, in the district of Bury, Lancashire. The township bears the name of Birtle-cum-Bamford; is in Middleton parish; and lies near the Manchester and Rosendale (sic) railway, 2½ miles NE of Bury. ... Pop. 2,350. Houses, 404. The inhabitants are employed chiefly in cotton and woollen manufactures, and in calico printing. ... The church was built in 1849. There are three dissenting chapels [Primitive, Wesleyan and Congregational].'

1835: In this year a Primitive Methodist 'preaching place' was erected in Bamford, according to the local preacher Thomas Smith, of Wawfire(?) near Rochdale, who in 1851 completed a return to the [1851 Census of Places of Public Religious Worship](#).

A description of the chapel was given in the 2 August 1895 edition of the *Heywood Advertiser* on the occasion of the re-opening of the chapel after major modifications:

'The structure is about sixty years old, and for a long time it enjoyed the reputation of being the quaintest little chapel in the district. The site is lower than the roadway and on a steep gradient. Under the chapel, with entrance at the back of the building, were two cottages, and in order to provide these with sleeping accommodation, the floor of the chapel was arranged in the form of a gallery, the entrance to the chapel being up some steps from the roadway and through a door at the top of the gallery. The preachers had to ascend the outer steps, descend the gallery, and then ascend into the pulpit. For a long period the absurdity of this arrangement was sorely felt by the congregation ...

1844: The [1844 6" OS map](#) shows the village of Kenyon Fold (part of Bamford) on the Bury Road. An unnamed road goes north from the village and less than 200 yards up this road lies a 'Methodist chapel' which scales at about 27' x 30'.

1850: [Heap's 1850 Trade Directory](#) Part 3, page 68: the entry for Birtle-cum-Bamford:

Under 'Places of Worship': 'Primitive Methodist Chapel, Dixon fold'.

Dixon Fold was a hamlet about 400 yards north of the chapel (Kenyon Fold was only 200 yards away to the south!).

1851: The chapel was recorded in the Census as stated above. Thomas Smith gave the name of the "Place or Parish" as Wonderfull, in Middleton Parish and said that the preaching place has two cottages beneath. On the Census date, there were 37 worshippers in the afternoon service and 20 in the evening. The afternoon Sunday school attracted 70 scholars.

1856: The first mention of this chapel in the *Rochdale Observer* was made in the edition of 12 April 1856: 'SERMONS.—Last Sunday two sermons were preached in the Primitive Methodist Sunday School, Bamford,'

The chapel footprint was very small; we know the chapel was upstairs and two cottages were downstairs. I cannot find any other building that might have been the Sunday School.

1867: The [Registration List: Lancashire](#) shows

'No. 4: Bamford, Rochdale District.'

1869: The 1869 *Slater's Trade Directory* for Rochdale lists thirteen PM Places of Worship including Bamford (see 'Rochdale and Area PM Societies and Chapels' on this website').

1895: The *Heywood Advertiser* reported at length on 2 August on the re-opening of the chapel; the description of the old chapel was given in the 1835 entry above. The report continued:

'Ultimately the building became so dilapidated that it could no longer be used with safety, and it must either be repaired or closed. A scheme of restoration and improvement was undertaken, and has been carried out to a most successful issue. The cottages have been done away with, the floor of the chapel has been lowered and made level, the entrance has been removed to one end of the building, where it has been surmounted by an arched window of fair proportions. The building has been re-roofed after a more ecclesiastical fashion, new windows have been inserted, and new ... (?) have been provided in the centre of the chapel. Altogether a sum of over £300 has been expended. ...

Mr George Kemp M.P. ... congratulated the friends present ... unlocked the door, and declared the chapel open.'

1908: The chapel can be seen on the [25" OS map](#); the road it stood on had by then been named War Office Road.

1914: According to the *Rochdale Observer*, between 1914 and 1918 the PM school was used for meetings of the Birtle-cum-Bamford Parish Council.

1918: The last reference I have found to the chapel in the *Rochdale Observer* was that on 18 February when ‘a meeting of woollen workers in the Bamford district was held in the Primitive Methodist school, Bamford, on Monday evening. It was addressed by Mr. A. Pendleton and Mr. John Ratcliffe, on trade unionism and wage questions.’

1925: According to [‘Genuki: War Office Road, Kenyon Fold, Primitive Methodist’](#), this chapel closed in 1925.

1928: By the time of the [1928 25” OS map](#), the chapel had been demolished and replaced by a terrace of four houses. Three of these still exist as Nos. 22, 24 and 26 War Office Road OL11 5HR; where No. 28 used to be is now rough land.

A photograph of a black-and-white picture of this chapel is held in the records of the [Rochdale Local Studies & Archives](#) but cannot be reproduced because of copyright.