

Summerseat Primitive Methodist Society and Chapel



Acknowledgement: OpenStreetMap

Summerseat is a village lying on the River Irwell about 1½ miles south of Ramsbottom and about 2½ miles NNW of Bury.

There is much interesting material in the book 'Manufactory, Methodism and the Making of a Village: Summerseat 1700-1988' by Jean Price, 1989. 'Methodism' refers mainly to the Wesleyan chapels in the village, predecessors of the current Rowlands Methodist Church, 35 Rowlands Road, but there are several mentions of the Summerseat Primitive Methodists. Extracts appear below, referenced 'Manufactory'.

1861: The *Bury Times* reported on 8 June:

Camp Meeting at Irwell Vale. – On Sunday last, very interesting out-door services were conducted by the Primitive Methodist Societies of Irwell Vale, Ramsbottom, Edenfield, and Summerseat, in a field near Alderbottom [just over ½ mile west of Edenfield]. The attendance was good considering the state of the weather, and no doubt the attendance would have been very large had the day been fine.'

1867: The [1867 List of Places for Public Religious Worship, Lancashire No. 117 Summerseat](#) (Bury Registration District) records two meeting places:

‘A cottage in the occupation of Widow Mellowdew’ and

‘A cottage in the occupation of Widow Sharples’.

1880: [Barrett's Directory of Bury, Heywood, etc 1880](#) pp. 268 Summerseat, states that ‘The Primitive Methodists have a preaching room here.’ The same entry appears in the 1883 edition. This preaching room ‘referred to the room over the Co-operative Stores in Railway Street where regular services were held, the anniversary services being held in the Mission Room at Brooksbottoms. This Primitive Methodist Society had grown out of earlier meetings at Grandma Shaw’s cottage in Hall Street.’ (‘Manufactory’, page 23)

1892: ‘In the latter part of the 19th century, the members bought an odd-shaped piece of land next to the Railway Street Co-operative Stores, and themselves built a chapel at street level and a Sunday School below. The back wall of this building went straight down to the bank of the River Irwell, which meant that the school was subject to flooding. The chapel opened in 1892 and was part of the old Primitive Methodist No. 1 Circuit, with visiting ministers from Walmersley Road [Bury], Edenfield and Ramsbottom.’ (‘Manufactory’, page 23)

The [1908 25" OS map](#) shows the chapel, labelled ‘Prim. Meth Chapel’, on the bank of the river Irwell on Railway Street West, Summerseat, close to the junction with Peel Hall Road. It scales at about 40 feet x 31 feet.

The chapel was joined on the north side to the ‘Summerseat and Brooksbottoms Co-operative Society shop, the first Co-op shop in the village, opened in 1861. The chapel was much smaller and plainer than the Wesleyan chapel up on the hill, but with a lively congregation and a flourishing Sunday School. The school below the chapel had a tiny stage and carried on a losing battle with the river, which often flooded and was responsible for the faint smell of damp when the hymn books were opened and for the brown damp spots on the ebony-framed photographs on the walls. It was here that coffee and buns were served after the Whit Walk. On the day of the School Anniversary the children took charge of the service in the tiny chapel, sitting in choir stalls, reading the lessons and taking the collection.’ (‘Manufactory’, page 26)

The ‘Manufactory’ book has a rather indistinct photograph captioned ‘*Primitive Methodist Sunday School preparing for the Whit Walk c1930. The building on the right with the notice boards is the Railway Street Primitive Methodist Chapel, next to the other Co-operative shop*’

1909: The Bury Archives hold the chapel accounts for the period 1909 to 1956 (CRW).

1899 to 1919: During this period there was only one report in the local newspapers about the chapel’s activities (in the *Rochdale Observer* of 7 January 1903, announcing a forthcoming bazaar), but there were numerous reports in the *Cotton Factory Times* of meetings of various cotton industry unions held in the Primitive Methodist Schoolroom, Summerseat.

Here is an example from 7 December 1900:

'WEAVERS' Association –The half-yearly meetings in connection with the above association were held at the Primitive Methodist School, Summerseat, on Monday night and at the Temperance Hall, Ramsbottom, on Tuesday night. ... The members decided to accept the recommendations of the committee:-“That in future no strike pay be allowed to low scale members. 2nd: That members on the higher scale be paid under expiration of lease, when a total stoppage occurs.” It was also decided to join the Textile Workers' Association.'

1932: 'The Primitive Methodist Chapel in Railway Street merged with the Wesleyans in 1932 ...' ('Manufactory', page 27)

1940: The chapel was listed in the [1940 Methodist Church Buildings Report](#) Districts 'B', Circuit 228 Bury and Ramsbottom. The following information was provided:

Summerseat (Railway Street): made of stone; seating 180; pews; one hall and one other room.

1955: 'The Primitive Methodist Chapel in Railway Street ... closed its doors in 1955, giving up its long battle with the Irwell, although there was still a Sunday School of 50 children.' ('Manufactory', page 27)

The [6" OS National Grid map](#) surveyed / revised: pre-1930 to 1955, Published: 1956 still shows the chapel and adjoining buildings, the former labelled 'Meth. Church'.

The [6" OS National Grid map](#) surveyed / revised: 1958 to 1968, Published: 1969 appears to show the chapel and adjoining buildings but the chapel is unlabelled.

Sometime later, the chapel was demolished; the site is now a small park. The nearest building on the west side of the river is Al Bosco restaurant, Robin Road, Bury BL9 5QP.