

## **Tunstall Church**

### **Transcription of a description of Tunstall Church, published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine, 1903, in the section Connexional Outlook**

Primitive Methodists must always feel deeply interested in the church at Tunstall, if for no other reason than that it stands at the head of the list of Primitive Methodist Churches, and was the scene of the labours of the pioneers. It is gratifying to know that at least one near relative of the founders is still a member and regular worshipper at the chapel, and that the cause is prosperous. Tunstall is not a large town, but there are 850 scholars in the Sunday School, and it is remarkably well staffed with officers and teachers. A pleasing feature is the large number of lady teachers who have classes. The adult classes are very large also, and they are real adult classes. In one of them there cannot be fewer than forty or fifty young men. The school premises are commodious, and have in them a large number of class-rooms and halls, so that the adult classes can have a room to themselves. In the work of the church it is gratifying to notice that there are a splendid company of capable and devoted young men who will maintain the splendid traditions of the fathers. On a Sunday evening, two or three weeks ago, there could not be far short of one thousand present in the chapel at the service, and we judge the regular congregation will not be far short of this number. The place is seated for 1,450 persons. It is a shapely building, and although at present needing some little renovation, is capable of being made into one of the very finest buildings in the Denomination. A scheme for its improvement is at present under consideration, and practical utility, as well as a worthy desire that the Connexion should in all respects be represented in the best possible manner at its head centre will lead all to hope that the improvement will be carried out in the best possible manner. And a church with so large a membership and congregation, so flourishing a school, such a splendid band of workers, both of men and women, will doubtless do the best that is possible, remembering that in a certain sense they represent the Denomination as no other church does. The Rev. T. J. Horne, in a bazaar handbook just issued tells the story of the rise of Primitive Methodism and the evolution of chapel building in Tunstall, illustrating his tale with pictures of the first chapel erected in 1811, of the second erected in 1834, and of the present structure erected in the jubilee year of the Connexion, 1860. The story is interesting, and even romantic, and the pictures may be regarded as fairly representing the growth of Primitive Methodism in taste, in extent, and influence. Judged from the outward appearance the first chapel might have been a couple of cottages, all the features of it indicating not an Ecclesiastical building, or even a public hall, but simply a plain cottage or two. The reason of this is known. For three years the great revival had been carried on in the hope that the converts would be received into other churches, and without the slightest intention of establishing a new denomination. In 1810 the Wesleyans would not receive them into church fellowship, and it became necessary to start independent societies. But in 1811 the thought had not fully taken hold of the minds of the founders that their work would result in the formation of a new Church, and although they were prepared on account of the pressure of circumstances to erect a place of worship at Tunstall, having doubts of the permanence of the societies as sections of a separate and independent religious community, they erected a building which could have been easily altered into one or two dwelling houses. The chapel of 1834 is a plain, substantial building, evidently intended for the purposes of a place of worship, and the present building could be made into as fine a property as could well be desired. The story Mr. Horne has told should inspire the society and congregation at Tunstall to attempt something bold and worthy of their unique place

amongst the churches of Primitive Methodism. They are not without considerable financial liabilities at the present time, and the renovation scheme, if carried out on a worthy scale, will be moderately costly, but in comparison to their predecessors in 1811, 1834, and even 1866, they are numerous and influential, and have much better financial resources.

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## **References**

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