

WORTHINGTON METHODIST CHAPEL

(PRIMITIVE METHODIST 1820 - 1833)

(WESLEYAN METHODIST 1833 - 2022)



PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHAPEL c.2022

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - DECEMBER 2023

PREFACE

The area covered by the author's website in NW Leicestershire was well blessed with Methodist Chapels. Only one locally, the Wesleyan Reform Chapel in Griffydam (Chapel in the Valley) now survives as a place of worship. Most have been, or are in the process of, being converted into residential buildings or business premises, although some like Osgathorpe Wesleyan Methodist Chapel have sadly been demolished. The author felt that providing sufficient information could be researched on these once vitally important pillars of the community, then their history should be recorded for future generations.

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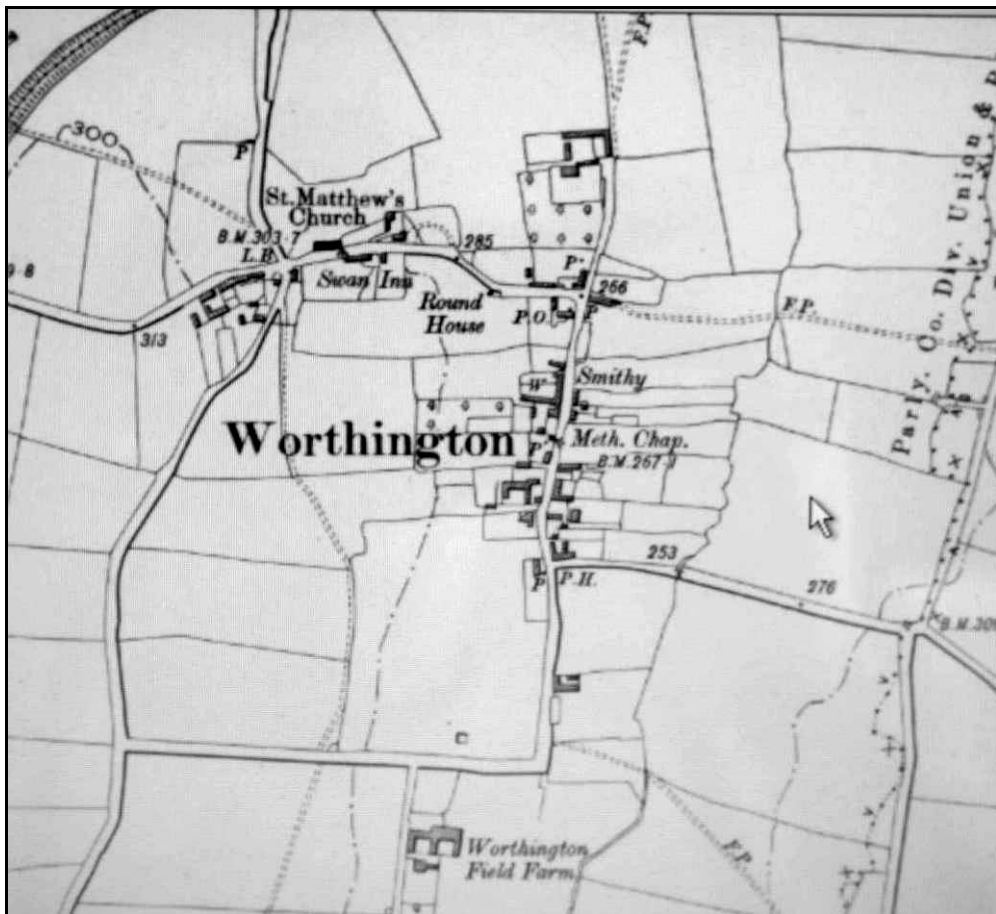
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author sincerely thanks Michael Green for sharing his history on Worthington Chapel which has contributed greatly to this publication.

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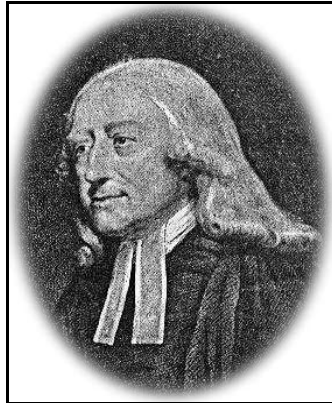
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LOCATION OF CHAPEL



Extract from 1903 issued O/S map showing location of
Worthington Wesleyan Methodist Chapel

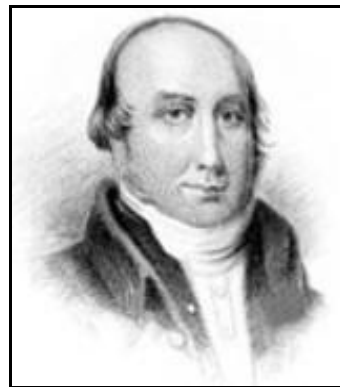
THE DEVELOPMENT OF “WESLEYAN” AND “PRIMITIVE” METHODISM IN THE LOCAL AREAS



John Wesley
1703 – 1791



Hugh Bourne



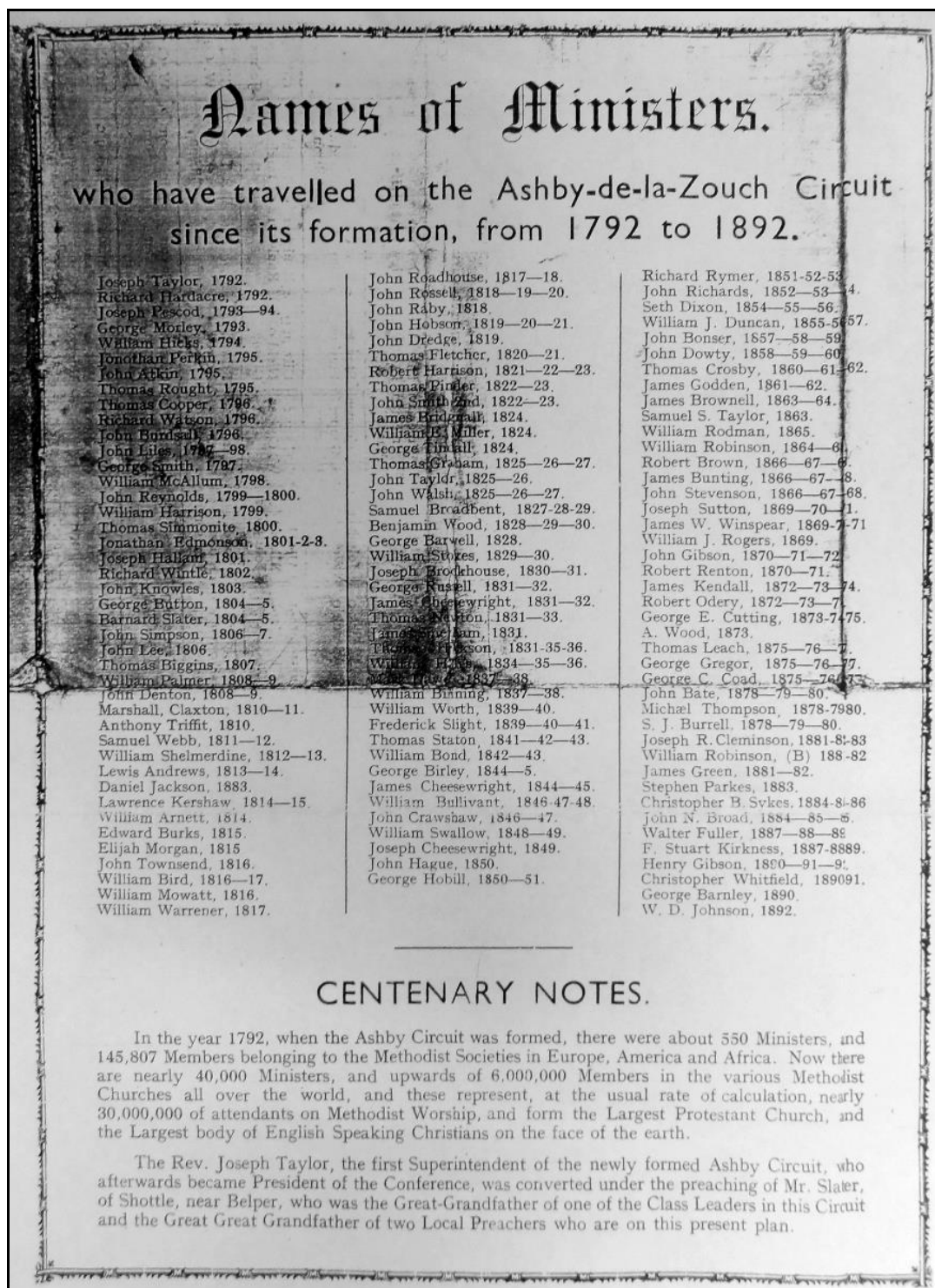
William Clowes

In the Methodist Recorder dated 1898, it mentions that John Wesley's brother Charles, as early as 1743, and possibly earlier, ***“had preached the gospel to the poor at Cole Orton, who heard it with the greatest eagerness”***. It was also recorded in the Methodist magazine of 1825, that John Wesley held a service in the fields at Griffydam in 1743, even before the Wesleyan Chapel itself was built. John Wesley preached at Griffydam Chapel on at least two occasions – the second being on July 19th 1779 at the new chapel when it was only one year old.

Methodism has its roots in eighteenth century Anglicanism. Its founder was a Church of England minister, John Wesley (1703-1791), who sought to challenge the religious assumptions of the day. Wesley was a High Church Tory Clergyman, whose methodical system for obtaining personal salvation, was never meant to become a separate religious denomination. His preaching of evangelical revival was to revitalise the Church of England, and it was only because the Anglican Church did not accept his ideas that Wesley broke away. Wesley's impetus was his belief in salvation for all men, and he would preach this whenever and wherever he went. His travelling preaching was the cornerstone of his Ministry.

The formation of the early Methodist societies in the early 18th century was brought about by those who had heard Wesley's preaching, so Methodism was always a movement in which the momentum came from the people involved. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was set up within Wesley's life-time and remained under his autocratic control until his death in 1791. In 1792, the “Ashby-De-La-Zouch Circuit”

was formed, and this eventually became the controlling organisation for Primitive and Wesleyan Methodism over a wide area covering villages such as Griffydham, Staunton Harold, Swepstone, Whitwick, Coleorton, Swarkstone, Osgathorpe, Tonge, Ibstock, and so on. A copy of the old document below gives a list of Ministers who travelled on the Ashby circuit for 100 years from 1792 to 1892. Quite amazing !!



Although Wesley declared, "I live and die a member of the Church of England", the strength and impact of the Methodist movement made a separate Methodist body virtually inevitable. In 1784, Wesley gave legal status to his Conference, the "Yearly Conference of the People called Methodists", which moved towards the legal

separation of Methodism from the Anglican Church, and ensured the continuation of the Methodist movement after his death. He also ordained ministers for America, where there was a drastic shortage of clergy to administer the sacraments, following the War of Independence. The Bishop of London had refused to ordain ministers for this purpose, and Wesley felt he was forced to act. Disputes about the status of the travelling preachers, and the administration of the sacraments were resolved by the "Plan of Pacification (1795)", four years after Wesley's death, which was a decisive break with the Church of England. For the first time, Methodists in Britain became legally able to conduct marriages and perform the sacraments.

The **Primitive Methodists** were a major offshoot of the principal stream of Methodism – the **Wesleyan Methodists**. In the early decades of the 19th century, there was a growing body of opinion among the Wesleyans that their Connexion was moving in directions which were a distortion of, not to say a betrayal of, what John Wesley had brought to birth in the 18th century. In 1808, a Methodist lay-preacher **Hugh Bourne**, became the catalyst for a breakaway, to form the Primitive Methodists, resulting in him being expelled from the movement. **William Clowes**, at the age of 24, had a long lasting conversion after attending a Wesleyan Methodist love feast (communion service) on Jan 20th, 1805. From that time, he grew rapidly in his new found faith, and soon became a Wesleyan Methodist class leader. He joined with Hugh Bourne and others in promoting open air camp meetings from 1807 onwards. Because of his involvement and commitment to these events, he was expelled from the Wesleyan Methodists in 1810. This expulsion resulted in Clowes and Bourne beginning a separate movement, which took the name **Primitive Methodists** in 1812. Their followers then became known as Primitive Methodists. These "open air" preachers were known as '*Ranter Parsons*', *because of their enthusiastic preaching*.

The Primitive Methodists differed from Wesleyan Methodists in several regards, including the encouragement of woman evangelists. Both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist communities grew rapidly during the 19th century. It was from among the Primitives, that many Trade Union leaders emerged towards the end of the century. The Methodist Church wasn't without its internal schisms. Another major Methodist branch was the United Methodist Church, which itself was formed from earlier mergers of smaller Methodist groupings. It joined with the Primitive Methodists and Wesleyan Methodists in 1932 to form the present Methodist Church in Britain.

"Primitive" was probably used to clarify their self-understanding that they were the true guardians of the original, or primitive form of Methodism. The sorts of issues which divided the Primitives and the Wesleyans were these:-

- The Primitives focused attention on the role of lay people.
The Wesleyans developed a high doctrine of the Pastoral Office to justify leadership being in the hands of the ministers.
- The Primitives stressed simplicity in their chapels and their worship.
The Wesleyans were open to cultural enrichment from the Anglican tradition and more ornate buildings.
- The Primitives concentrated their mission on the rural poor.
The Wesleyans on the more affluent and influential urban classes.
- The Primitives stressed the political implications of their Christian discipleship.
The Wesleyans were nervous of direct political engagement.

- The Primitives encouraged women Evangelists

Taken from the “Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society” by Doctor Colin P Griffin:-

Methodism exerted a significant influence not only upon the social and spiritual life of the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire miners, but upon their economic and political activities also. In this coalfield as in others, there was a close connexion between the Methodists and the emergence and development of mining trade unionism, since it was from amongst the ranks of professed Methodists that the most prominent trade unionists appeared.

As early as June 1817, a South Derbyshire magistrate, Thomas Beaumont, informed the Home Office that an application had been made to him from several respectable gentlemen relating to the expediency of suppressing certain religious meetings which have recently been held by a religious sect, who call themselves (and not applicably) Ranters. These meetings are held in the open air, in the streets and the lanes of the villages, or Commons or other wastes and are attended by thousands of *the lower orders of the people*, and lately are so much increased that we cannot but be apprehensive of the consequences.

Beaumont asked for authority to suppress the meetings and prosecute anyone found attending them, since the meetings formed a working class body which might be easily directed into other channels than the strictly religious.

THE DEMISE OF METHODISM

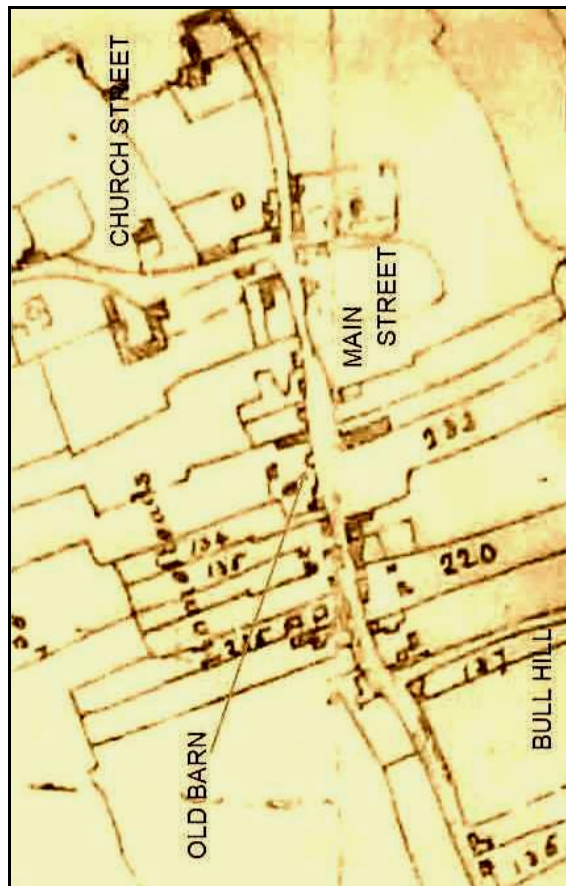
One of the most important facets of Methodism was the social life which it provided for its members, and of course, in the earlier days, little social life existed, apart from the public houses and the chapels. One of the most notable aspects of Methodist social life was the mixing of age groups which occurred in all activities. This strengthened the community spirit, and also meant that families mixed socially far more than they do today, emphasizing the family atmosphere of the chapel. The reasons for the demise of Methodism in the twentieth century are self evident, but the First World War brought about the beginning of a serious decline in religious observance, and after the Second World War, when people started to become more affluent, and increased opportunities evolved for individuals, enthusiasm for Chapel life and organised religion continued to decline.

HOW PRIMITIVE METHODISM CAME TO WORTHINGTON IN 1820 AND ITS DEMISE IN 1833

Worthington was one of the earliest Primitive chapels still in use prior to its closure and sale to the Wesleyan Methodists in 1833. The tablet on the front of the chapel dates it as 1820. This is only two years after the third Primitive Methodist circuit was established in September 1818 in Loughborough, 8 miles away.

Around the end of 1817 and the beginning of 1818, the first Primitive Methodist missionaries were sent to Leicestershire. We are told they met with less persecution than in Rutland and Lincoln and were favoured with a large amount of success and that the Missionaries, Messrs Benton, Wedgwood and Heath, effected much good at *Loughborough, Coleorton, Whitwick, Markfield, Sileby and numerous other places; many sinners were brought to God....* (The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion: by John Petty). Coleorton and Whitwick were again visited around April 1818 by John Harrison. He found *crowds – not hostile, but curious and eager so see and hear* (The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church: H B Kendall).

On 16th June 1818, John Harrison also missioned Ashby. The seeds sown in the area found fertile ground in Worthington and, no sooner, had a society been formed there then very unusually a chapel was quickly erected in Main Street on a small plot of land on which a barn had stood.



Extract from the 1806 Inclosure (Enclosure) map of Worthington and Newbold showing the approximate location of the barn referred to above

On 27th January 1821 the land was acquired by the Trustees who were :-

NAME	PLACE OF ABODE	EMPLOYMENT
John Jarvis	Ashby de la Zouch	Confectioner
Benjamin Robottom	Ashby de la Zouch	Hosier
John Farmer the Younger	Worthington	Farmer
John kinson	Worthington	Farmer
Joseph Skevington	Loughborough	Lace Manufacturer
William North	Loughborough	Bricklayer
William Waterfield	Worthington	Labourer

The Deed set out that the trustees had agreed to buy the land from George Blount of Worthington for £21 and had erected on it a Methodist Chapel or Meeting House for the purposes set out. The land was 8 yards long and 7 yards wide containing just 56 square yards

The trustees were to permit from time to time and at all times for ever hereafter the said new erected Chapel or Meeting House hereditaments and premises hereinbefore mentioned to be granted and released to be used and employed as a place of worship of Almighty God by the people called the Primitive Methodists and that no person or persons whatsoevershall be admitted or allowed to preach or perform divine service therein but such person or persons as shall be appointed at the quarterly meetings of the said people called Primitive Methodists held at Loughborough.

From themselves the trustees were to appoint a steward or treasurer to receive all the seat rents which money was to be applied towards repayment of the debt on the premises arising from the erection of the building or for repairs of the chapel.

Should the trustees see occasion to sell the newly erected chapel or meetinghouse they could do so either by public sale or private contract for the best price or sum that could reasonably be obtained. When the number of trustees was reduced to three the survivors were to choose other trustees to make the number up to seven again.

The chapel had been erected the previous year in 1820 and it is thought it opened in the summer of that year missing by only a few months being the first Primitive Methodist Chapel in Leicestershire. This distinction fell to the one in Dead Lane Loughborough which had opened in May.

The front door is on Main Street with an arched fanlight over it and above is inscribed "Primitive Methodist Chapel AD 1820". Externally, apart from the cement rendering covering the red brick added at a later date, the building is unchanged. It was a basic box type redbrick Georgian chapel. with a hipped slate roof.

Above the inscription is a 6 pane sash window. Both side elevations have sash windows with stone sills. Apparently, hearsay has it that it accommodated 125 worshippers, with 100 in the body and 25 in the small gallery on the east. The chapel was just 6.9m deep and 5m wide, coming complete with a balcony.

On opening, the chapel formed part of the Loughborough Primitive Methodist Circuit but around 1822 it was transferred to the Ashby one.

The Primitive Methodist cause in Worthington struggled. It is clear the chapel had been erected too hastily before the society had been firmly established. After all, Ashby had to wait until 1833 and Coleorton 1839 before their chapels were built.

Despite being an unsuccessful society, it rather surprisingly produced a young man who became a Primitive Methodist Minister, Rev'd Henry Pope, who had started his religious journey as a Wesleyan.

He was born on October 11th 1805 at nearby Griffydam. His father ran a farm there and we are told that both his parents were respectable God fearing people who endeavoured to give their children a Christian upbringing. The parents were members of the Griffydam chapel. Sunday, in those days, meant chapel and Henry Pope had happy memories, even in old age, of being a young boy trotting beside his mother going to and from it and holding onto her dress as he tried to keep up with her!

The religious training, his parents' faith and his mother's love for the Lord had a lasting impression on him and, on 22nd February 1822 aged 16, he accepted Christ as his Lord and Saviour in Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist chapel. For reasons which are unclear, he did not remain with the Wesleyans at Griffydam but immediately joined the Primitive Methodist Society at Worthington who had not long opened the chapel.

Young Henry was welcomed with open arms by the Primitives possessing as he did great natural ability and talent and it was not long before he was called upon to use these. The planned preacher was unable to fulfil his appointment and Henry was asked to take his place. We are told he "tremblingly" agreed. He was so suited to local preaching that shortly afterwards the 1823 June Quarterly meeting of the Ashby

Circuit asked him to become a local preacher. He was diligent in his studies and fully devoted to the work and regarded as the best and ablest of all the local preachers.



Reverend Henry Pope

At this time, the Ashby circuit was in urgent need of another travelling preacher and Henry was invited to fill the position and he entered the ministry on 31st August 1824. So, in just over two and a half years he had progressed from his conversion in a Wesleyan chapel to a trainee minister in the Primitive Methodist Church. On the circuits we are told he was a much loved and hardworking minister. In nine of his circuits – there are no records for his first three – every circuit had an increase in members.

The early years of the Primitive Methodist Connexion were far from easy for travelling preachers. "At that time", wrote Rev'd J Bellingham, "the Connexion was one vast missionary organisation, circuits were extensive, journeys long and the preachers suffered from exposure to all kinds of weather. The homes were few and the salary was about fourteen shillings per week. The open air work was very heavy and only a few of the men were able to travel over thirty years."

Sadly, the Rev'd Henry Pope was not one of the few. In his thirtieth year of travel his voice failed and he had to seek superannuation. He settled in Bath where he died in 1887 at the age of 82.

A Return filed in 1829 in compliance with a resolution of the House of Commons requiring the numbers attending nonconformist places of worship to be given recorded only 20 for the Worthington Primitive Methodist chapel.

Unsurprisingly, shortly afterwards the services ceased. The chapel was put up for sale and the following was placed in the Leicester Journal of 25th October 1833.

To be sold by PRIVATE CONTRACT

THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL, at Worthington in Leicestershire, with the Gallery, Pews &c. The chapel fronts to the public street, is modern built, in excellent repair, and might if necessary be converted into a commodious dwelling-house.

For further particulars, and to treat for the purchase, apply to **Mr. JOHN FARMER**, or **Mr. JOHN ARMSON**, of Worthington.

WESLEYAN METHODISM COMES TO WORTHINGTON

The Methodist society established in Worthington by John Hall and others was one of the first in the area and was a Wesleyan one. It is known that around 1780, the society started to meet in a room adjoining the farm of Worthington Farmer, Samuel Gilbert, where it met for some 50 years. It is thought that the farm was located at the junction of Main Road, Manor Drive and Church Street.

Worthington at first formed part of the Derbyshire Round (a Round being the old name for Circuit) until the formation of the Ashby de la Zouch Wesleyan Circuit in 1792. It prospered and there was a strong desire amongst the members for a chapel of their own which was realised in a most unusual way.

Living at the farm, and a servant there, was Sarah Coltman who had become a member of the Wesleyan society in 1787. It appears she attended the Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel some 1 ½ miles away. She was regarded as a steadfast and consistent member. The society approached Messrs Farmer and Armson and it was agreed that the chapel could be purchased for £82.00. Although only paid a modest wage, Sarah Coltman had been frugal and happily provided the money so that the purchase could go ahead and on 4th December 1833 it was completed. The trustees were :-

William Deacon	Worthington	Farmer
James Gilbert	Worthington	Maltster
Thomas Ratcliffe	Worthington	Farmer
James Burton	Breedon on the Hill	Lime Burner
Thomas Gilbert the Younger	Osgathorpe	Cordwainer
John Knight the Younger	Stordon	Farmer
William Kidger	Thringstone	Grocer
Thomas Wainwright	Swannington	Farmer
Henry Burton the Younger	Swannington	Farmer

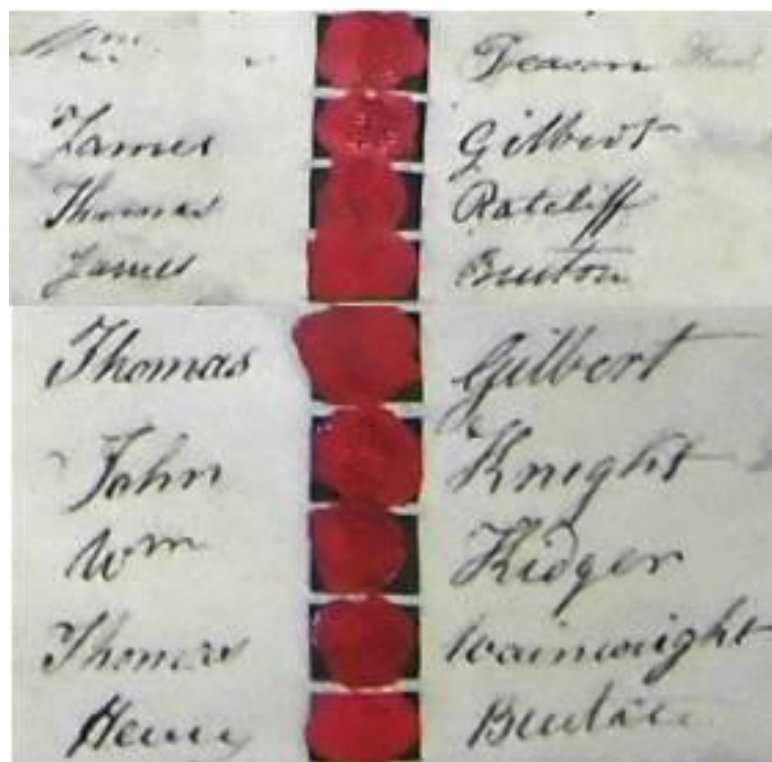
The Deed of the chapel provided that the trustees were to allow those appointed at the Yearly Conference of the People called Methodists held in London, Bristol, Manchester or elsewhere as established by a Deed Poll enrolled in Chancery under the hand and seal of the Reverend John Wesley and dated 14th February 1784 to preach there and expound God's holy word and perform other acts of religious worship. However, no doctrines were to be preached other than those contained in the Reverend John Wesley's Notes on the New Testament and his first four Volumes of Sermons published by himself.

The document went on to provide that -

- All money received or collected on behalf of the chapel was to be applied in meeting the outgoings on it and towards the support of the preachers stationed by Conference in the circuit;

- Every June there would be a trustees' general meeting at which the steward or trust treasurer chosen annually by the trustees would give a fair and true account of monies received for and expended on the trust premises to be approved by the trustees;
- At least two days' notice in writing of every trustees' meeting was to be given to the Superintendent Preacher who would have the right to attend either in person or by proxy and to vote on all questions relating to the trust estate.
- Trustees' meetings were also to be announced at services so that the congregation was aware they were taking place.
- If the majority of the trustees were of the opinion that the chapel should be sold it was permissible for them to sell it with the consent of Conference and utilise the net proceeds in the acquiring of a more suitable chapel to be held on the same trusts;
- If the number of trustees was reduced to five, the Superintendent Preacher with all convenient speed was to nominate sixteen persons including the surviving trustees willing to act to whom the chapel was to be transferred.

The document concluded with the Wesleyan trustees "signing, sealing and delivering" the deed,



Signatures of the Wesleyan trustees.

The new trustees proceeded to stamp their ownership of the chapel by obliterating "Primitive" from the inscription on the front of the building.



The partly obliterated inscription.

Sadly, Sarah was only able to worship at the chapel for three years. On 28th March 1837 she had attended the Easter Monday Lovefeast at the Griffydam chapel and been well but two days later she passed peacefully away. Her generosity in respect of the chapel continued. After leaving a legacy of £40 to Griffydam, she left the rest of her estate for the repair and extension of the building.

In common with the Wesleyan chapel at Gelsmoor and others in the vicinity there was only one service on a Sunday in the evening at 6.00 pm at Worthington to give members the opportunity to attend the afternoon service at 2.00 pm at Griffydam, the mother church in the local area.

The next official count of the numbers attending service at the chapel was that taken on the 30th March 1851 under the Ecclesiastical Census of that year which required Returns to be completed by all places of worship whether Anglican or nonconformist. The number returned saw a significant improvement in that given in the 1829 Return further to the resolution of the House of Commons, The Return signed by James Gilbert, Steward (and also Class Leader), recorded that 70 people had attended the evening service on that Sunday.

Following the death of Mr Gilbert, he was succeeded by John Franks, a local preacher and then by John Wardle senior who, with his wife, Sarah, and family had arrived at Field's Farm Worthington in 1852. With the Chester family the Wardle's were linchpins of the Worthington chapel.

During the latter half of the 19th century several improvements took place which included a wooden floor and seating with backs to replace the brick floor and forms. The lighting in the early days was by way of chandeliers with tallow candles which could be a distraction when, during worship, one or more had to be snuffed out. The lighting was later greatly improved by the replacement of the tallow candles with wax ones which, in turn, were replaced by paraffin lamps.

The hymns were initially sung with no musical accompaniment at all so it was necessary to have a presenter who led the singing from the congregation. This role

was filled by Joseph Walker for many years until he died in 1856. During the night of his death it is said that a neighbour heard the most beautiful singing from the room where he died. His role was taken over John Stanton with assistance from Ann Wardle, the eldest daughter of the Wardle's.

Plan of the Ashby Wesleyan Preachers in the Ashby Circuit, 1825.

Preacher's Name	MAY							JUNE							JULY							AUGUST							SEPTEMBER							OCTOBER						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ashby, G.																																										
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There was no Sunday School until 1864-65 when one was formed with help from Edward Kidger and Edward Smith who came over from Ashby. John Wardle junior became the first Superintendent and William Chester of the Mill, Secretary. The first teachers were Sarah Wardle and Mrs Joseph Blunt. Following the establishment of the Sunday School, an afternoon service was started and music arrived in the form of a. harmonium loaned from Field's Farm.

The usual Sunday School Anniversaries or Sermons, as they were sometimes called, were held. and somehow the premises accommodated the scholars, teachers and congregation though unsurprisingly many of the latter often had to be turned away. Thus , we learn that on 12th May 1878 at both services many were unable to obtain admission. The total collections were £6 6s. 0d.

In 1905, the Sunday School Anniversary Sermons were held in the afternoon and evening of 29th May. The preacher was Miss Burden of Grantham and it was a glorious day and once more there were large congregations. The children had been trained by Mr John Goodman from Osgathorpe and sang their hymns *nicely* to the accompaniment of the American organ played by Miss Chester with her *usual ability*

Playing a valuable role in the Society had been Mr and Mrs Adkins of Diseworth who helped with the entertainment of preachers. Additionally, Mrs Adkins became Class Leader for the Ladies, John Wardle continuing in that role for the men until his death in 1890.

In 1892, it was realised that there was a problem. All the trustees appointed in 1833 had died so application had to be made to the Charity Commission to appoint new ones and on 11th April 1893 an Order was made appointing the following :-

John Wardle	Worthington	Farmer
William Chester	Worthington	Miller at Worthington
Thomas Roulston	Breedon on the Hill	Water Mill Farmer
Robert Plowright	Coleorton	Farmer
Geary Kendrick	Coleorton	Baker
David Sketchley	Thringstone	Butcher
Herbert Rowell	Griffydam	Grocer
John Willars Weston	Whitwick	General Dealer
Alfred West	Whitwick	Boot Factor
William Jones	Coalville	Boot Factor
John Pearson Adcock	Ashby de la Zouch	Miller
John William Wells	Ashby de la Zouch	General Dealer
George Rowse	Swannington	Farmer
William Goodman	Osgathorpe	Grocer
John Arthur Goodman	Osgathorpe	Clerk

For the members and friends, the chapel was the focus of their social life during the week with the various activities taking place.

There were services of song such as in March 1891 which was entitled "Primrose Garth" given by the choir and a few friends. The connective readings were given by Mr. Robert Hance, headmaster of the Griffydham Wesleyan Day School in Pegg's Green and the pianist was Miss Sketchley. There were also talks promoting Home and Foreign Missions and lectures such as that given by Reverend W. Jackson Bush of Measham on 26th March entitled "Common people and common sense".

In the summer of 1898, the chapel had undergone a thorough cleaning and renovation and re-opened on the 27th August with two special services which were well attended with a number of visitors travelling from Oakthorpe and Netherseal to be present. There was special singing by the children accompanied by John Wardle on the harmonium. On the following day, a public tea was held in the granary at Fields Farm followed by Mr Cox's inimitable lecture on "Rev'd Peter MacKenzie".

In 1905, the society was dealt a crushing blow when Mr and Mrs Wardle junior left the area. On the 27th February, a large gathering of members and friends assembled in the chapel to say their goodbyes. The chair was taken by Mr John Goodman who with others spoke of the high appreciation in which Mr and Mrs Wardle had been held by the congregation and friends. Handsome presents suitably inscribed and subscribed for by the congregation and friends in the village were presented. These were an electro plated tea and coffee service with matching tray handed over by Mr Charles Chester and marbled clock given by the teachers and staff by John Spencer. Mr and Mrs Wardle responded appropriately and the evening concluded with the singing of "God be with you until we meet again".

For reasons that are unclear the chapel was again closed in 1905 for the purpose of painting, cleaning and renovation and re-opened on 16th July. While closed, services took place in another granary this time provided by Mr Chester at Worthington Water Mill.

There are many references to a good number of people being present at events in the small chapel but it with great surprise to learn that at the Good Friday tea in 1911 as many as 80 were able to sit down for it!

1920 was a milestone year and the centenary was celebrated over the weekend of the 14th and 15th August with a service on the Saturday at 3.30 pm and two on the Sunday at 2.30 pm and 6.00 pm. All three were taken by the Rev'd George Lampard from Middlewich. The Saturday service was followed by a tea in the Parish Room at 4.45 pm which in turn was followed by a Public Meeting in the chapel at 6.00 pm.

In the letter to friends the Superintendent Minister, Rev'd William Hopper, the Society Stewards, Philip Adkin and Reuben Edgley, and Treasurers, John Spencer and John Chester, wrote :-

The passing of the years has naturally brought many changes. Many of our staunch supporters and workers have gone "Home," and the economic conditions of country life have taken many to the towns and cities. In the midst of all the difficulties common to Village Church life, we have tried to maintain our cause at Worthington and not without success. We are greatly hampered in our work by the lack of Sunday School accommodation. We have a flourishing School, but the little Chapel is quite unsuitable for carrying on successful work among the young people. We are appealing to all our friends to send us a gift for our Centenary Building Fund. We are striving to raise at least £100, at our Centenary Services, and in commending this

appeal we believe no more worthy object can command our attention than the work of our Church among the young people especially of our villages.

WESLEYAN CHAPEL,
WORTHINGTON.

Centenary
Celebration.

On **SATURDAY, AUGUST 14th,**
THE
Rev. GEORGE LAMPARD
(OF MIDDLEWICH)
WILL PREACH AT 3.30 P.M.

TEA will be provided in the PARISH ROOM,
at 4.45 p.m., at a reasonable charge.

PUBLIC MEETING
in the CHAPEL, at 6 p.m.
CHAIRMAN:
Mr. J. A. GOODMAN, C.C.,
Supported by
Revs. GEORGE LAMPARD, W. GUEST,
W. HOPPER, and others.

On **SUNDAY, AUGUST 15th,**
The Rev. George Lampard
WILL PREACH in the AFTERNOON at 2.30,
and in the EVENING at 6.0.

COLLECTIONS at all the Services on behalf of the Building Fund,
and generous support is requested.

A. H. THORPE & SONS, PRINTERS, WILKINS.

The Centenary Flier

The result of the appeal was disappointing with only £50 being raised

Continued over page

OVERVIEW

The Primitive Methodists had not been the only ones to separate from the Wesleyans. There had been others too but gradually over the years there had been amalgamations until finally only the Wesleyan, United and Primitive Methodist Churches remained. Discussions had taken place between them over a long period and the three were brought together in 1932. On September 20th 1932, there was a huge procession which marched in witness from Methodist Central Hall in Westminster to Hyde Park where there was a rally. This was followed by the uniting Conference at the Royal Albert Hall when the “Uniteds”, the “Prims” and the “Wesleyans” became the Methodist Church of Great Britain.



Victorian hat and coat peg

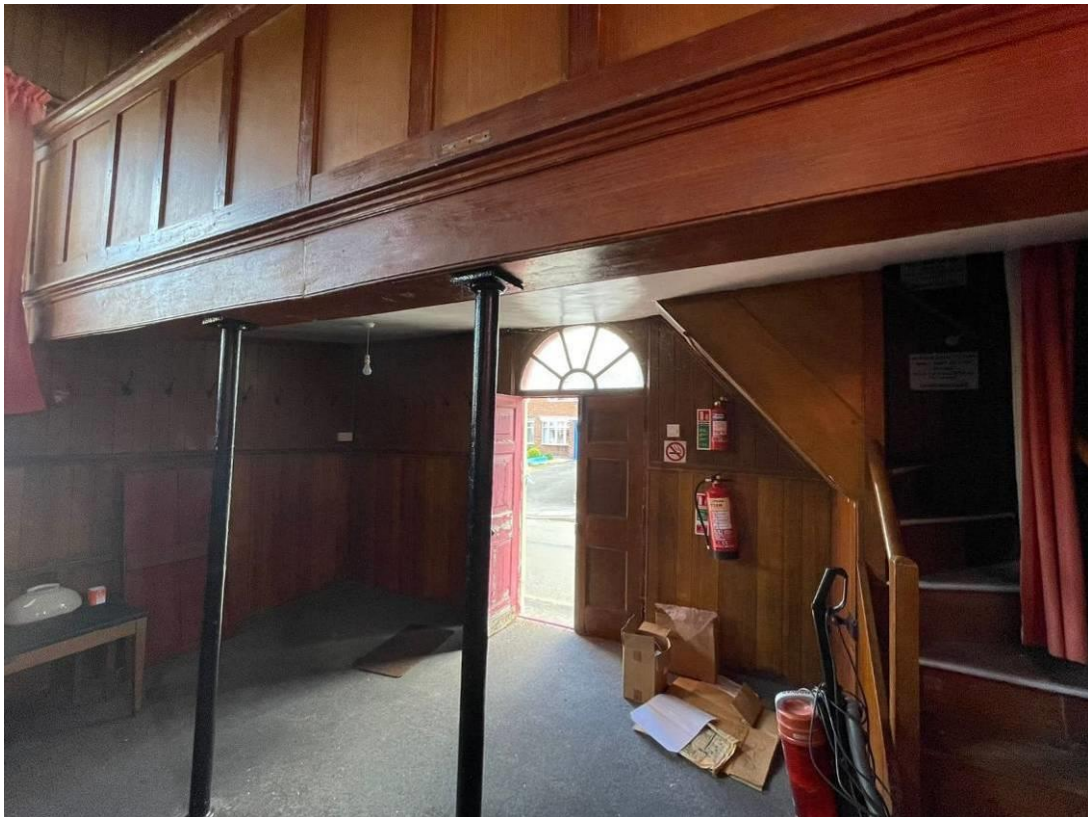
Some 20 – 30 years later, substantial renovations took place at Worthington Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. The pulpit and harmonium were removed. A dado rail was fitted on three walls and above the rail wooden tongue and groove planking was installed and stained. At a later date, a laminate was fitted below the dado to floor level. The wooden floor was removed and replaced by a concrete one. It seems probable that the planking was done because of damp and the wooden floor taken up because of rot. Be that as it may, the stained wooden planks add considerably to the character of the interior. Thankfully, some of the Victorian hat and coat and hat pegs were retained.



INSIDE CHAPEL



BALCONY WITH SEATING FOR 25 WORSHIPPERS



STAIRS UP TO BALCONY

The handicaps experienced with the work amongst children and young people which it had been hoped would have been overcome as a result of the Centenary Appeal sadly continued. Council houses had been erected in 1957, creating St Matthews Close, and had compensated for the depopulation which had previously taken place and was a concern in 1920. There were six classes of Sunday School children, four being held downstairs and two in the gallery.

In common with other churches and chapels, the number of children attending Sunday School declined until it closed. Numbers of adults declined also leaving a faithful but elderly core who had to grapple with maintaining a chapel in need of repairs and renewals. A Renovation Fund was established in 1981 but there was an ever increasing gap between money available and the increasing cost of repairs and renewals which became beyond the congregation's reach leading to further deterioration.

On the 1st September 1983, the chapel became a Grade II listed building. In 2006 North West Leicestershire District Council carried out a district wide "Buildings at Risk" survey. The chapel was identified as being "At Risk". The surveyor found;

Slipped slates. Ivy covering the rear wall and part of the roof causing displacement of slates, UPVC RWG's. Patches of cracked and damaged render which is tracking moisture and causing damp patches. External joinery in need of repair and repainting. Overall shabby condition.

In addition to the poor state of repair, there was an absence of basic facilities while acceptable in 1820 was certainly not over 180 years later. There was no mains water or sewage and the chapel must have had the unique but unwelcome distinction of being the only church or chapel in use without a toilet. The absence of basic facilities was also an impediment to attracting users. For example, the local authority would have hired the chapel as a voting centre had these been available.

To rectify this, plans were drawn up in 2008 for the laying on of mains drainage together with the installation of a wc with sink and a separate sink and draining board adjoining. These would be installed under the balcony to the right as one entered the building.

This was followed in 2009 with a report from David Granger Architectural Design Ltd on the condition of the premises which confirmed what was all too apparent, and that which was not, which included urgent repairs to the roof. These were carried out in 2011 by Merison Building Maintenance Contractors at a cost of £11,179.34 with the aid of a grant of £9,179.27 from the former Ashby & Coalville Methodist Circuit.

On the advice of the Methodist Conservation Officer, a conservation accredited architect was commissioned, and on 31st October 2014, Mark Stewart of Building Design Ltd visited the chapel for a preliminary survey followed by a more detailed one on 10th December preparatory to a report and plan. His Conservation Management Plan. was issued on 4th March 2015.

This provided for three options –

A - Do everything specified at an estimated cost of £125,880

B - Do the minimum necessary and have a kitchen and toilet at an estimated cost of £78,174

C - Do the minimum necessary without a kitchen and toilet at an estimated cost of £60,288

By this time, Worthington, because the number of members was less than 6, had become a class of Ashby Methodist Church. This meant that the Church Council there became its Managing Trustees.

A support group for Worthington was established and on 27th May it met and agreed to meet Mark Stewart to clarify some issues and confirm his charges for drawing up tender documents based on option B. On 30th June Ashby Church Council approved the instruction of him to proceed to the tender stage.

Mark Stewart's report had been sent to the Methodist Conservation Officer who found his Conservation Management Plan "incredibly helpful" and requested a visit to Worthington. The meeting took place on 5th October in the chapel and the Conservation Officer indicated that, for funding purposes, Worthington "ticked most of the boxes".

On 30th October, Mark Stewart was instructed to prepare specifications and obtain tenders. On receipt of these a meeting took place to discuss them and funding with particular reference to application being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund and it was agreed that a report and cost/funding plan be prepared. Unfortunately, when the question of making application to the Heritage Lottery Fund came before Ashby Church Council for a second time in May 2016 it was not sanctioned.

There the matter stood until having increased its membership to more than 6, Worthington once more became a Local Church and was able to move forward with mission and resurrect the outstanding matters of repair, renewal and refurbishment along the original lines with one important difference. One great disadvantage of the premises' location was the inability to extend laterally as only the land upon which the chapel stood together with a narrow strip adjoining some 18" wide on the south side and rear was owned. Thus, the need for proper facilities for the Sunday School for which the centenary appeal was made depended on acquiring nearby land which vision disappeared over the years with the gradual development of this. Because the chapel was "land locked", disabled access could not be provided which would also have assisted the elderly some of whom found the two steps into the building difficult to negotiate.

The only but simple answer was to reduce the floor to pavement level by removing the concrete one which had been laid inside and installing a new wooden suspended floor which would allow for the removal of the two steps thereby affording level access. A new lengthened door to match the existing would be fitted. An application to North West Leicestershire District Council to alter the front elevation was granted on 14th January 2019. The approval of the Methodist Church to the plans for repair, renovation and refurbishment of the 200 year old chapel has now been given and the quest to secure the necessary funding has started.

Despite the poor condition of the premises, it was felt that the chapel had an important role still in the village. It was well located and had for a number of years been used by the Parish Council for its meetings.

Around 2008, a children's activity group for 7-9 year olds was run for a time with help from Ashby Youth for Christ. In September 2010 a highly successful Café Church was established which met every Thursday during school term time, which was a part of "Fresh Expressions". These are new forms of church that emerge within

contemporary culture and engage primarily with those who don't go to church. The activities involve plenty of mugs of coffee and tea, lots of talking, fun sessions, prayer, outings and the like.

The chapel sought to use its heritage as part of its mission by opening on a Saturday during "Hello Heritage" (*Hello Heritager* run by NWLDC is a celebration of the heritage and rich culture within and across North West Leicestershire), which attracted good numbers. Other activities took place from time to time. Four services a month offering a wide variety of worship with Lectio Divina which means "divine reading," and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and provide special spiritual insights together with normal morning worship, Holy Communion and an afternoon service was followed by tea and fellowship.

The chapel did not have running water or a toilet and after all possibilities had been explored, sadly the chapel closed and the grade II listed building was put up for auction at a guide price of £10,000 in 2022. The chapel was sold by auction for £67,500 and an application was made to North West Leicestershire DC for change of use to a single residential dwelling and associated external alterations.

References

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