

ILKLEY WESLEYAN CHURCH
(The Ilkley Gazette 11 July 1903)

THE NEW CHURCH BUILDING AND SUNDAY SCHOOL

LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONES

For many years the Ilkley Wesleyans have felt the need of more commodious and better equipped church premises for Sunday school and various purposes other than those of general congregational worship, the rooms at present available under the church being far too small and ill adapted for present day requirements. The history of the denomination in Ilkley goes back to the early days of the last century, a place of worship being erected on Addingham Road in 1834, and which building is now in the possession of the District Council and used as a local museum. The present Church in Wells Road was erected in 1870 and evidently those responsible for the erection of this handsome gothic structure did not think the necessity would ever arise for extensions of the character now being taken in hand, as a land purchased only allowed for the erection of the church and a house for the minister adjoining. The Sunday school and all other meetings and gatherings associated with the various church organisations were provided with accommodation, as we have stated, underneath the church and no large room being available; congregational meetings of whatever character, if at all numerously attended, have had to be held in the Church itself - a not very satisfactory arrangement; especially to those who consider a Church should only be used for purely devotional purpose. Years ago, demand upon the accommodation led the minister's house being given over to the caretaker and some of the rooms added to the church as vestries.

The scheme for providing the buildings now in course of erection originated some four or five years ago while the Rev. Joseph Dawson was Superintendent of the circuit, who called a meeting at his house to consider the matter. The meeting was well attended and as an outcome of the deliberations it was arranged to purchase the plot of land adjoining the church. This land, which is directly opposite the entrance to the church, was secured from the executors of the late Mr. Alfred Davey of Nesfield Hall, who along with one or two other gentlemen purchased it with the object of erecting a public house thereon - a scheme which, like many others of the same character never came to ought. £1,050 was given for the land and the purchase was affected in December 1899. At the time the land was secured it was not thought advisable to take in hand any large scheme for raising of money but by means of small sales of work and other efforts sufficient was raised to pay for the conveyance of the land and the interest on the purchase money. Soon after Dr. Stephenson, however, took up residence in the circuit, the feeling began to grow that it was about time the erection of the proposed building was preceded with, and the first serious move with a view to this end was the promotion of a bazaar which was held in June 1902, and resulted in no less a sum than £970 being handed over to the treasurer of the fund as the net proceeds; A magnificent result due in a great measure to the efforts put forth by Mrs Stephenson and Miss Hepton, the chief promoters. In the meantime, subscriptions had been received amounting to over £700, and with the two amounts and a promised grant of £400 from the 20th Century Fund, the erection of the building was taken in hand. The plans sent in by Messrs Adkin and Hill architects, Ilkley and Bradford was selected and the following firms secured the various contracts; - Mr. L. T. Learoyd, builder, Ilkley; Messrs Eagle & Mawson, joiners, Ilkley; Messrs W. & H. Pickles, plumbers, Shipley; Mr Thomas Nelson, slater, Bradford; Mr Oswald Lister, plasterer, Ilkley; and Mr J. W. Walton, painter, Frizinghall. The whole undertaking is estimated to cost £4,500, besides the sum of the land and building, £450 being required for furnishings.

The structure the architects have designed is on what is known as the central hall principle, and architecturally it will be a free treatment of late gothic. The large hall will have a maximum

accommodation for 650 people, but the interior is so arranged that the hall can be reduced to two sizes. 12 classrooms will range round the central hall divided from the same by sliding partitions, and these and the whole of the interior woodwork will be of pitch pine. Near the entrance there will be two adult classrooms provided with lavatory accommodation so as to serve as cloakrooms for concerts etc. In addition to the central hall there will be a lecture room to accommodate 120 a church parlour to accommodate 80 and an infant's classroom to accommodate 60. At the South end of the central hall there is to be a telescopic platform to seat 100 and a gallery at the north and will seat an additional 120. At the front, which faces north, will be a large tracery window to be filled with coloured lights, and other accommodation will include caretaker's apartments, kitchens etc. Hammer dressed local stone is being used for the masonry and the building will be roofed with blue slates. The heating arrangement is to be in the low-pressure hot water system, with the boiler in the basement, and for ventilating purposes a fan is to be fixed discharging foul air into a turret over the small tower to be a conspicuous feature of the northwest angle of the building.

The ceremony of laying the foundation stones took place on Saturday afternoon in beautiful weather.

The Rev. Dr. Stephenson presided over the proceedings and amongst the number of gentlemen present, the following were noted: Rev. F. H. Blanchford (Congregational minister), Rev. W. H. Ibberson (Baptist minister), Rev. A. Markham and Rev. T. H. Mallinson (circuit ministers), Rev. T. Sanderson (Harrogate), Rev. J. W. Silcox (Ilkley), Rev. J. Hornberry (Manchester), Mr. T. S. Simpson (Leeds), Mr. H. Sutcliffe, J.P., Mr J. J. Sanderson, Mr. S. P. Myers, J.P., Mr E. Ingram, Mr. J. Knight, Mr J. C. Naylor, Mr G. W. Norfolk, Mr. W. A. Lupton, Mr. C. P. Dove, Mr. V. Dobson, Mr. T. H. Vickers, Mr. J. Brown, Mr. E. P. Dove, Mr. L. Eagle, Mr A. Adkin (architect), Mr Arthur Hepton, Mr Ernest Hepton Messrs. S. Kellett and A. Jenkinson (treasurers) and Messrs. J. P. Holtby and Geo. Brown (secretaries).

Prayer was offered by the Rev F. H. Blanchford and a portion of scripture read by the Rev. W. H. Ibberson while the singing of several hymns was accompanied by the choir.

In opening the proceedings, Dr Stephenson announced that he had received a telegram from the Vicar of Ilkley Rev. Dr. Muntz, who was on the continent, expressing regret that he was unable to get home in time to take part in the ceremony as intended, and hoping that they would have a very happy and successful gathering.

The first stone, which was situated on the right side of the entrance to the new building was laid by Mr S Kellett, to whom a very handsome silver trowel was presented by Mr. A. Adkin, the architect. Underneath this stone was placed a bottle containing a copy of the current issue of the *Ilkley Gazette*, *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury* (from which the betting news had been cut out), *Yorkshire Daily Observer*, *British Weekly*, *Methodist Times*, *Methodist Recorder*, a circuit plan list of the trustees and the building committee and the name of the architect.

Having performed the operation of laying the stone and made the customary declaration, Mr Kellett remarked upon the great progress that had taken place in respect of Sunday school work during the past century and what a very large number of Sunday schools were now scattered over the length and breadth of the land. He had a very great reverence for the name of Robert Raikes to whom Sunday Schools owed their origin, and which had been the means of making the home life of our land much better and purer than it was when Robert Raikes first began his groundwork. He was pleased that they had amongst them that afternoon two sons of the late Rev. W. O. Simpson one of them had just come home from South Africa and had come down here to show that he had a kindly remembrance for the people who worshipped here in the days of his boyhood and when his father was minister. The other son who was present was about to lay a stone to the memory of his father, a good man who laboured

hard in this country and who would ever be held in the most affectionate remembrance by all who were brought into contact with him. Mr Kellett concluded by giving a few particulars relative to the financial position of the undertaking.

The stone on the opposite side of the entrance was laid by Mrs. Hepton in memory of her daughters, Emily and Polly, to whom a silver trowel was presented by Mr. J. C. Naylor, who with the other gentleman undertook this pleasurable day as trustees of the building.

Mr. Naylor said he had been connected with the Sunday school 21 years and therefore it was only natural that an event of this character should carry his mind back over the range of years. It was a singular pleasure to have the privilege of presenting A trowel to Mrs Hepton, because he was associated with her late husband as chapel steward for a number of years and also gave the address at the unveiling of the window the Hepton family had placed in the church to his memory. He could only reiterate what had previously been said and expressed the hope that this building will be a great blessing in the days to come.

Mr. Arthur Hepton, who spoke on behalf of his mother, said that the memory of this day would ever be cherished by their family. It was 30 years since his father brought his family to Ilkley and having been here and there amongst them for so many years he felt like an old Ilkleyite, and had a very strong attachment to the place he was for a long time associated with the Sunday school and hoped that in the building they were erecting the good work done in the old school would be carried on much more successfully.

Mrs. J. T. Jackson being unable to present the stone on which her name was inscribed was laid by Miss Gertrude Jackson, to whom a silver trowel was presented by Mr John Brown.

Mr. Brown who had been connected with Ilkley all his life, gave some interesting reminiscence relating to the old church in Addingham Road, which admirably illustrated the progress the church has made these days.

The next stone was laid by Mrs. S. P. Myers, to whom a trowel was presented by Mr. E. P. Dove and the one at the northwest corner was laid by Mr. T. S. Simpson, in memory of his father, the Rev. W. O. Simpson, the trowel being presented by Mr. L. Eagle.

Before Mr. Simpson laid the stone, Dr. Stephenson remarked that the Rev. W. O. Simpson was a very dear friend of his and that his death at the comparatively early age was a great loss to Methodism. His memory would never die, and the vivid remembrances of his preaching and work would be cherished by all who knew him for all through life.

After laying the stone, Mr. Simpson said he was greatly indebted to the friends at Ilkley for giving him the opportunity of fulfilling this sacred duty. He had had many happy associations with the place in the past and now there was to be a visible symbol of that association in shape of this memorial to his dear father. His brother, Mr. Edward Simpson, joined him in the financial part of the obligation involved and his mother very greatly appreciated the kindly feelings that had prompted it.

The stone at the northeast corner was laid by Dr. Stephenson.

In presenting the trowel, Mr. knight referred to the great and valuable services Dr. Stephenson had rendered not only to the Methodist Church at large but during the many years he had been connected with the Children's Homes. This building was to be a kind of children's home and therefore it was very fitting that Dr. Stephenson who had done so much for children, should lay one of the stones.

Dr. Stephenson remarked that it was rather an unusual thing for a stone to be laid by the pastor of the church in connection with which it was laid. Not many such instances had come under his own observation, and he was therefore very grateful to the friends who had spontaneously offered him this token of their respect and regard. He believed it was not alone because he had endeavoured to do something for children that they had so kindly asked him to lay this stone, but because he had endeavoured to do his duty in this circuit and also because his work here had been appreciated. (Applause).

The proceedings closed with the singing of the doxology.

Afterwards a public tea took place in the schoolroom; the tables being presided over by the following ladies: - Mrs. Eagle, Mrs. V. Dobson, Mrs. E. P. Dove, Mrs. Norfolk, Mrs. John Brown, Mrs. Stephenson, Mrs. J. E. Dove, Mrs. Naylor, Miss Hepton, Mrs. C. P. Dove.

In connection with the stone laying a public meeting took place in the church in the evening. Dr. Stephenson presided and the gentleman platform were: -Rev. T. Sanderson, Mr. W. H. Barber, BA., Mr. J. J. Sanderson, Mr. T. S. Simpson, Mr. J. O. Naylor, Rev. T. H. Mallinson, BA., Mr. J. Knight, Mr. J. R. Holtby and Mr Geo. Brown.

Dr. Stephenson, in some remarks, heartedly congratulated his friends on having reached the stage of the effort in which they were engaged. They were quite in as good a position as he hoped they would be by this time. He considered that in erecting this building they had undertaken an extremely important work, for not only was a large room needed, but likewise a variety of rooms because they must in these days be prepared to carry on Christian work with much more varied and elastic ideas than those some of them began life with 40 or 50 years ago. Manufacturers and businesses today could not be carried on successfully with old and antiquated machinery, nor could Christian work be carried on successfully in ill adapted and inadequate rooms or by out-of-date methods. In religion as in everything else they must go with the times. Methodism in Ilkley ought to be something more than a local thing. The beauty of the place attracted a great many people during the summer, many who were Wesleyans and many who were not, and this being so it ought to be a great centre of Christian life, a sort of city set upon a hill to which all the congregations of the West Riding, at any rate could look for inspiration and suggestions in all that was good.

The Rev T Sanderson, in the course of an able address, said the Methodist Church was the greatest Protestant church in the world and the greatest spiritual force in the present century. Methodism today was a stronger and more potent organisation than it had ever been in the past, and why because methodism did not rest on the day of Wesley or on the character or achievements of Wesley, great as that character and those achievements were, but because it rested upon the ideas and the conception of the New Testament. There was only one way of propagating the religion of the New Testament and that was by the creed and by faith - by character built upon creed and by creed made luminous by character.

Mere sensationalism is not worth the snuff of a candle. Large congregations that rested upon popularity and sensationalism had no permanent value. Godly men and godly women, self-denying and self-sacrificing: these were the pioneers of the kingdom of god and were the only true and adequate representatives of that Kingdom.

Mr. T. S. Simpson said there were two reasons why he was glad to take part in that day's proceedings. One of these was because of the associations of the place and the other because of the work to which they had set themselves. He was glad to meet once again so many old friends and to visit the scenes of his happy, boyhood days, where his father's memory was so affectionately cherished. It was one of

the greatest importance that children should continue to receive a religious education and that Sunday schools should be maintained in the highest possible state of efficiency therefore he was pleased to congratulate them in the work to which they had set their hands so determinedly and with such a splendid prospect of success.

Mr. J. R. Holtby (one of the secretaries) presented a financial statement. He said that the subscriptions promised amounted to £724 18s. 6d., and that the proceeds of the bazaar and the grant from the 20th Century Fund, the total amount raised previous to the stone laying was £2,118 17s. 6d. The proceedings that day had realised £664 18s. 7d.; Which made the total amount raised to date £2,783 16s. 1d. At the stone laying the following contributions were received: -Mr. S. Kellett £250, Mrs Hepton and family £100, Mrs. J. T. Jackson £100, Mrs. S. P. Myers £50, Rev. Dr. Stephenson £25, Mr. T. S. Simpson £15.

Mr. Barber, proposing a vote of thanks to all who had taken part in the day's proceedings said the erection of this building marked a new departure in Sunday school work in Ilkley. Sunday schools were more needed today than they had ever been in the past and they not only wanted well equipped premises, but the best educated and spiritually minded teachers it was possible to lay hold of.