

ILKLEY METHODIST CHURCH ROOF DESTROYED BY FIRE  
(Ilkley Gazette Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 1974)



Work on a £45,000 modernisation scheme at the Ilkley Methodist Church in Wells Road has been prolonged by at least three months as a result of the fire which swept across the re-constructed roof during the light hours of Monday evening. The building was planned to serve as Ilkley's future Methodist Church and community centre.

The alarm was first raised by Mr Roger Marshall and Ilkley architect who lives with his family in a flat at Wells Mews just above the church the thick pall of smoke could be seen from Ben Rhydding

The call was received at Ilkley fire headquarters at 7-17 PM and although the brigade was on the scene 2 minutes later the roof was well alight. However, with the assistance of the Otley brigade the blaze was under control in 25 minutes. Plaster and wooden joists fell on the empty floor below. Three families in Wells Mews were evacuated by the police as a precautionary measure. A large portion of the slates on the building's east side were removed by the firemen. Although the blaze was quickly put under control it was not until some two hours later that the firemen returned to the Ilkley headquarters.

#### TRIBUTE TO FIREMEN

A tribute to the work of the fire brigade in Monday evening's blaze has been paid by the Rev RJ Bradwell, minister of the Ilkley Methodist Church. In a statement issued this week he said: "the actual damage to our premise could have been a great deal worse had it not been for the prompt and efficient work of the fire brigade. It was their action which confined the damage to the roof. The whole of the roof has been damaged beyond repair from end to end. The situation could have been far worse. Had anything like this happened in another three or four months the damage would have been far greater. Naturally this will mean that the modernization scheme will now take longer than we had originally thought of. It is impossible to say how much longer but we must be prepared for three or four months being added. A completely new roof will have to be designed and constructed but meanwhile the work in the lower parts of the building will proceed as far as possible."

The former wells Rd Methodist Church, erected in 1871 to succeed the one in Skipton Road was demolished nearly four years ago, after the Methodist Trustees decided it would be more of an advantage to remodel the Assembly Hall rather than rebuild on the old site. The site was sold to building contractors and at present a block of flats is being built in its place.

The work on reconstructing the church roof ravaged by the fire on Monday evening was nearing completion. It was hoped the new building would be ready in January. Since the contractors moved in Methodists have shared the Ilkley United Reform Church on the Grove.

Picture shows the slates being removed from the roof just after the fire had been put under control.