

# CREDITON METHODIST CHURCH

## CENTENARY 1892-1992



This remnant of a gift envelope was discovered by Ken Turner, one of the present organists, behind the memorial plaque on the organ when it was dismantled in 1991. (See Item on page 2 for details.)

Methodist Church



Plymouth and Exeter District

for  
Chairman of the District:  
Revd Kenneth S. J. Hext M.A.  
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13.xi.91

It gives me great joy to send my Christmas to Crediton  
Methodist Church at its one hundredth anniversary. It is  
the church to which I owe so much - it was here that I  
was nurtured in faith, grew in commitment to Christ and heard  
the call to the Methodist Ministry.  
I give thanks for those who in past years bore witness to Christ  
and for the lively ministry of today. I pray that the  
power of God's Spirit will bless and further your efforts as you seek  
to glorify Him.

Kenneth Hext





This booklet and those like it throughout Methodism are of importance to future historians, for they tell the story, not of great events that shape history and change the world, but of small groups of ordinary people and the way in which their faith shaped their lives and the world around them.

For though we are celebrating the Centenary of our building, we are also celebrating the life of the Church over that last hundred years and the people named and un-named who in the name of Christ have served him here in Crediton and sought to share the faith.

Internationally our world is changing. We are watching the break up of the U.S.S.R. The hateful system of Apartheid in South Africa is struggling to its end. Tyrants in Romania have been overthrown and Germany reunited. Northern Ireland is troubled still. There have been violent incidents in some of our cities between young people and the police.

It is a time though of great advances in science, technology and the Arts. Many of our young people at Church have their own computers. A time of affluence for some and poverty for others. The claims of the developing world are constantly brought before us in appeals for aid.

In the Church we are just entering the second year of the Decade of Evangelism and the ecumenical movement continues to move forward.

For those who read these words in a hundred years time and look at our pictures, the world we represent will seem strange and distant. However different we appear, and however much the world changes, we believe that the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit are with us all, evermore.

*Robert O. Saunders.*

Robert Saunders. *Methodist Minister, September 1991*

## 1892 AND ALL THAT

Queen Victoria was born on Wesley Day (May 24th), 1819, and so was 73 years old and had reigned for 55 years when our church was opened in 1892. 'The beautiful new chapel' it was called in the Circuit Record.

In that year the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, began his fourth administration, which ended with his resignation in 1894.

Dr. E.W. Benson was Archbishop of Canterbury and Edward Bickersteth was Bishop of Exeter. The Poet Laureate, Alfred Tennyson, died in 1892.

1892 saw the end of the 7ft. gauge to which I.K. Brunel built his railways, the conversion taking place in one week-end, from Friday, May 20th. to the following Monday. Some 213 miles of this was west of Exeter.

The line was already open from Exeter to Barnstaple but it was another 5 years before the first motor-car reached Exeter. This was a Benz, shown in a circus in Pinhoe Road as a special attraction. The first car to drive into Exeter was seen early in 1898, a Daimler, en route from Land's End to John o'Groats.

Meanwhile, the preachers of Crediton had the use of the Circuit Horse until it was sold in 1852. After this, a horse was hired as needed, with a quarterly collection to pay for it.

Wages and prices were vastly different from those of our day. By 1898 carpenters were getting 6d an hour, bricklayers 6½d, labourers 4½d. But a house in Heavitree, with 3 bedrooms, bath, 2 sitting rooms, with garden front and back, could be rented for £18 per year or purchased for £290. In 1890 St. Anne's Well Brewery offered its Pale Ale at 14d a gallon, its stout at 18d. An entry in a Mint account book shows that in August 1813, 3 wash-erwomen were paid 12 shillings for 2 days work and their beer cost 3 shillings and fourpence.

It would be a further year before the first Labour MP was elected, and a further 26 years before women received the vote.

Dr. Stephenson, who opened our church, was a distinguished President of Conference. He founded the National Children's Home in 1869 and the Deaconess Order in 1890. He was Principal of the NCH from 1873-1900. (When the Memorial Plaque was removed from the organ a NCH collecting envelope was found underneath. It named the Principal as the Rev. W. Hodson Smith. He served from 1912-32. The address for NCH shown on the envelope was City Road, this being their Chief Office from 1913-1925).

F.W. Bourne, the Bible Christian President, visited Crediton, as detailed in later pages. The memorial he left to later years was a book - 'Billy Bray; The King's Son'. This became, and has remained, a Methodist best-seller.

It is against this background that we examine the history of our church.

## **MR. WESLEY CAME THIS WAY**

We in Crediton cannot claim that John Wesley preached or stayed here but his journals and diary give three references to Crediton which are of interest.

*Wednesday, April 18th 1744*

Before eight (a.m.) we reached Crediton (or Kirton), or rather the ruins of it; for the houses on both sides were all in ashes for several hundred yards. Lighting on a serious woman, I asked

“Are the people of this place now warned to seek God?” She answered, “Although some of them perished in the flames, the rest are just as they were before, cursing, swearing, drinking, playing and making merry, without God in their thoughts.” She added, “No longer ago than Thursday last the men who were rebuilding one of the houses were bitterly cursing and swearing one at another, and two of them above the rest, when an arch they were under fell, and crushed these two, with all their bones in pieces.” Will ye not at length hear the rod, and Him that hath appointed it? Wesley was on his way from west Cornwall to Minehead where he took a boat for the four hour crossing to Aberthaw, South Wales. He had preached at Sticklepath on the 16th.

The sight of our devastated town obviously made

an impression on Wesley. This is not surprising as it was only a few months after one of Crediton's most terrible fires - that of Sunday, 14th August 1743, when the fire raged from eleven in the morning until eight in the evening.

The ‘Universal Spectator’ told its readers “There is not a house standing in all the town from ‘The Sign of the Lamb’ to the uttermost end of the Green, which is half a mile, together with all the back-lets, lanes, byways, linhays, gardens and apple-trees, the apples roasting as they hung.”

Fires were not infrequent in Devon towns in the 18th Century. F.D. Gentry, in “Take care of your Fire and Candle” (p 124) lists nineteen in the Crediton area between May 31st 1832 and September 18th 1893, the last of which destroyed five cottages at Shobrooke.

Such disasters brought local folk together in a common concern to help the afflicted. Arthur Warne, in “Church and Society in Eighteenth Century Devon” (p 104) wrote, “when Crediton was devastated by a disastrous fire in 1743, with damage at lowest estimate of £50,000, a local committee was set up of an equal number of churchmen and dissenters”. The petition for subscriptions, signed by the vicar and the presbyterian minister, ended with these words. “In this cause, thank God both churchmen and dissenters are happily and heartily united.”

*Wednesday and Thursday, 28th and 29th September, 1748.*

We found great part of the congregation still waiting for us (at Plymouth). They attended again at four in the morning. At five we took horse, and by easy riding, soon after eight came to Tavistock. After I had preached we hasted on, rested on hour at Oakhampton (sic), and soon after sunset came to Crediton.

We could willingly have stayed here, but John Slocombe had appointed to meet us at Cullompton. Soon after we set out it was exceeding dark, there being no moon nor stars. The rain also made it darker still, particularly in the deep, narrow lanes. In one of these we heard the sound of horses coming towards us and presently a hoarse voice cried "What have you got?" Richard Moss understood him better than me, and replied, "We have no panniers." Upon which he answered, "Sir, I ask your pardon," and went by very quietly.

There were abundance of turnings in the road, so that we could not easily have found our way at noonday. But we always turned right; Nor do I know that we were out of the way once. Before eight the moon rose. We then rode cheerfully on, and before ten reached Cullompton.

*(Richard Moss, Wesley's companion, was a convert who lived at the Foundery, London, as a servant. He was able to convince the highwaymen they were not worth robbing.)*

*Thursday, September 1st 1785  
(Entry in Diary, not Journal).*

12 Crediton, dinner. 12.30 chaise. 3 Tiverton.

(Would that we knew who entertained him on that day. His timetable did not allow leisure after the meal. Wesley was now in his 83rd year, and he travelled by chaise rather than on horseback).

## THE BEGINNINGS

So Methodism in Crediton was not the direct fruit of Wesley's labours. It is to Exeter that we must look for our origins and early growth. The story is told by Elijah Chick in his "A history of Methodism in Exeter and its Neighbourhood" (1907). He writes that during the 18th century Methodism in Exeter was not strong.

This is hardly surprising considering the degree of persecution to which they were subjected. The London Morning Post of May 16th 1745 reported a disgraceful incident which took place at the Methodist Meeting House behind the Guildhall on May 6th. 1745.

The congregation was pelted with filth and every person was beaten up and their clothes torn. Some of the women were lamed and others stripped naked and rolled in the gutter, their faces smeared with lampblack, flour and dirt. The rioters entered the Meeting House and interrupted the minister with obscene language and fell upon him in a furious manner with blows and kicks.

Dr. Leslie Church, in his book 'More about the Early Methodist People' points out that the author of the article was not himself a Methodist and gave an entirely independent and spontaneous description of the scene. The writer explains that he would not have "taken up his pen in defence of the Methodists had they not been daily and openly treated in Exeter with such murderous violence and abuse as would have made even pagans to have blushed."

Despite persecution Methodism was not stamped out and the cause made steady progress over the next 50 years.

More important within the Devon circuit were Tiverton and Cullompton, the latter being head of the circuit until 1807. In this period the Methodists held occasional services in Crediton. One of the early ministers, William Aver (1797-8), preached in the old meeting house (the Presbyterian, later Unitarian) on the text 1 Corinthians 14:8 "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle". Chick and Venn give conflicting information about this service but are agreed on the text. And we do know that Mr Ryan and Mr Kerslake obtained a licence for a preaching room in Dean Street.

A room on the ground floor of a house in Dean Street was licensed on April 15th. 1808. The owner was Mr. Samuel Laimbeer, who let it to a Mr. Collier. The signatories were Mr. Laimbeer, Mr. Miles (?) Ryan, William Pope, Samuel Kerslake, William Tapper and Richard Blake. Mr Ryan, a

local preacher living in the neighbourhood, preached in Crediton and Fordton, but no settled work had been done.

Between 1798 and 1808 the Exeter Society had increased very rapidly and become far and away the most important in the neighbourhood. So in 1808 it was placed at the head of a circuit. William Fowler and James Spinks were the first preachers with William Beal as missionary. Crediton was the first among the new places opened up because of his work. He was invited by Mr Samuel Kerslake and took for a preaching place, a large room, "the refectory of the ancient deanery." 'Uncle Jim' Berry, who died in 1901 aged 96½ remembered services being held there. Mr Berry was converted at the age of 70 and taught in the Sunday School class until he was over eighty. Mr Browning remembered it as still in use for Sabbath School purposes as late as about 1850. Services were held there until the chapel on Bowden Hill was opened in 1816.

## THE FIRST CHAPEL

Bowden Hill was built in 1815 at a cost of £1,023.16.0. In 1829 trustees had to report that the present debt was £ 1,068 including outstanding loans of £982.

The Bowden Hill church was for many years burdened with a very heavy debt. It was said that several men who had promised help were alarmed

at the responsibility and withdrew before they had executed any deeds. A few others were left to struggle on as best they could. At one time no less than £1,300 debt rested on it. In 1831 it was proposed to sell it, but apparently no one would give anything approaching the sum needed by the trustees, and so they held on in hope of better times. In 1846 the building was licenced for marriages, the first groom being Samuel Finch and his bride Miss Elizabeth Thom.

In 1844 the Reverend George Curnock was appointed to the Exeter circuit to reside at Crediton. The membership then was 34. His work in the town was greatly blessed and even more so his labour among the "Navvies" then engaged in the railway (the Exeter and Crediton railway was leased to the Bristol and Exeter, and opened on 12th May 1851).

By 1846 it was thought desirable to form a new circuit with Crediton as its head, and including Cheriton Bishop, Morchard Bishop and Newton St. Cyres. Initially all these names remained on the Exeter plan but were worked virtually independently. The first balance sheet showed the financial problems the new circuit would have to face.

At a meeting on October 1st 1846 Mr J. Sanders was unanimously elected circuit steward. It was resolved that as it appeared desirable to keep a horse to do the work of the circuit an effort be forthwith made to raise means for the purchase. But the financial plight of the circuit led to the sale of the horse for £6 in mid-summer 1852. Morchard

#### **INCOME**

|                                 |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Class tickets                   | 7.5.1    |
| Quarterly collection            | 1.9.6    |
| Cheriton Bishop                 | 1.8.6    |
| Mrs Adam & Mrs Huddy (5/- each) | 10.0     |
| Contingent fund                 | 2.10.0   |
| Morchard Bishop                 | 1.5.0    |
| Given by chairman               | 5.11     |
|                                 | <hr/>    |
|                                 | £14.14.0 |

#### **EXPENDITURE**

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Mr Curnock, board and quarterage | 14.12.6  |
| Stewards book                    | 1.6      |
|                                  | <hr/>    |
|                                  | £14.14.0 |

and Newton St. Cyres were lost, as there was no trust property in either place; Crediton with Cheriton had to return to the Exeter circuit. Recovery was fairly prompt but the work at Bowden Hill was always cramped by the inconvenient premises.

An indication of the strength of church life in Crediton is given by the ecclesiastical census of 1851. On March 30th attendances were counted, with the following results (giving the best attendance figures of the day)



|                                |               |       |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| <i>Anglican</i>                | morning       | 1,000 |
|                                | sunday school | 250   |
| <i>Unitarian (Bowden Hill)</i> | afternoon     | 75    |
|                                | sunday school | 24    |
| <i>Brethren</i>                | afternoon     | 120   |
| <i>Independents</i>            | evening       | 230   |
|                                | sunday school | 160   |
| <i>Baptist</i>                 | evening       | 80    |
|                                | sunday school | 50    |
| <i>Wesleyan (Bowden Hill)</i>  | evening       | 130   |
|                                | sunday school | 90    |

Also listed is "Wesleyan preaching room, Uton in Crediton, with an evening attendance of 40." The report was signed by John Hugill, minister, of Crediton, who also signed the Wesleyan report. Venn (II 167) says these were cottage services.

This report gives the seating capacity of our church as 275, 200 of these sittings were free.

The Anglican report commented that in the large rural district the congregation fluctuated according to the weather. March 30th was an unfavourable day, and the attendance consequently less. The average evening attendance at the Wesleyan Chapel over the year was 160.

Including children, this means at least 2209 persons attended church on that day. The population census for 1851 was 6000, so the proportion of church attenders was high. The 1981 census figure for Crediton was 6169. This does not mean

a static population level between those dates. In fact it declined to a low point of 3490 in 1931, then built up again to its present figure. This reflects the decline in the agricultural population and the later build-up in the commuter population of the town.

It would be a mistake to see the above events as happening in a town much as we know it today. It is interesting to consider the climate in which Methodism took root in Crediton. In early 1800's the manufacture of serge for which the town had been famous was in decline, even so, serge manufacturers were named in 1823 (Pigot's Directory). People turned to the production of boots and shoes, there were flour mills and tanneries and Mr. Budge's lozenge factory was established. It is not surprising to learn that large quantities of cider were made and sent to London and other markets.

Some of the other trades mentioned are bakers, brickmakers, coopers and carpenters, druggists and hat makers, rope and twine manufacturers, maltsters and masons, watch and clock makers, and four surgeons (in 1823). In 1850 there were at least 25 inns in Crediton. Stage coaches left 3 times a week from the White Hart for Exeter and Barnstaple. This all seems to indicate a busy and prosperous community, but there was a great deal of poverty too. In 1795, only 3 years before the first known Methodist preaching, Mr. J. Buller, the magistrate had read the Riot Act to a crowd in West Town. This was the first of the Crediton Bread Riots which took place 'on account of the dearness of provisions.' The 25th Dragoons galloped out

from Exeter to restore order. When the men departed the women remained as "words won't feed our families." In 1801 handbills appeared urging people to kill Mr. Drake, the unpopular miller of Fourmills. Bakeries were attacked, and food shops looted and there were further riots in 1847 and 1850. On January 6th 1850 a riot was sparked off by navvies, laid off by frost, from the North Devon Railway, marching through Crediton crying "We're hungry, we're hungry."

From this background were drawn the early Methodists of our town, our Fathers in God, who took their preaching room in Dean Street, who had the determination to build their first chapel on Bowden Hill and struggled with its debt. Then there was the thatcher, William P. Harper, who had the vision of a beautiful new chapel for Crediton and saved the money to give the land on which this church is built.

## **THE NEW CHAPEL**

Of the beginning of a scheme to replace Bowden Hill chapel Chick says "One brother, whose memory is very precious to Crediton Methodists was William Perkins Harper. We have heard it said of him that in prayer he seemed to lead the company present into the immediate presence of God. This good man left in trust a sum of money toward building a new church, which, by the year 1891, amounted with interest to close on £400. The friends were, with this help, enabled to buy a splendid site in Union Road, on which in 1892, was erected the

beautiful and commodious block of buildings. A Methodist Recorder article on Exeter Methodism of August 30th 1900 says of Mr Harper that "his nickname was Heavenly Father," due to the fact that he was never known, but once, to commence his public prayers with any other words." He is described as a working thatcher, so his generous gift is a tribute to his thrift and devotion to the work of God.

The stone laying of the new building was described thus in the Exeter circuit Wesleyan Methodist Church Record:-

Crediton new chapel. The Foundation Stones were laid on September 4th 1891 by Lord Lyminster MP (now Lord Portsmouth), Lady Lyminster and Miss Lile. The service was conducted by the incoming supt. the Rev Richard Harding and an admirable address was given by the outgoing, the Rev George Tyler. Thomas Andrew Esq. JP presided at a luncheon subsequently, at which appropriate speeches were made and subscriptions given. The financial result was about £60.

The trustees met on March 30th 1892 and discussed the arrangements for the opening. The date would be April 28th 1892 and the ceremony would be performed by the President of the Conference, the Rev Dr Stephenson. He was to preach at 3 p.m. and address the public meeting at 6.30 p.m. There would be tea at 5.00 p.m., J.H. Lile Esq. of London to be chairman. Mr Lane of Bristol was also to be invited on the opening day.

The cost of the scheme was £1,725. Mr R. Jennings was treasurer, Mr W. Stoye, secretary, Mrs Lyne was appointed to be caretaker at 2/6 per week. A heating apparatus was ordered for £35. James Crocker of Exeter was the architect, and Messrs. Stephens and Son the Contractors. Messrs. Thomas and Jennings were to be Plumbers and Decorators, the latter acting as Hon. Clerk of Works.

## **THE CHAPEL OPENS**

In its report of the opening the Circuit Record wrongly gives April 27th as the date. Other records make it clear that April 28th was the date, as given in the trustees' minute book.

"April 27th was a red letter day in the history of Crediton Methodism, the beautiful new chapel being on that day opened for public worship, and dedicated to the service of God. The weather was everything that could be desired, and that, together with the anticipation of hearing our popular President, Dr Stephenson, brought together a large number of friends from Exeter, Tiverton and other places to join in the dedication services, and to rejoice with the Crediton friends over so successful a completion of the undertaking. All were delighted with the new premises which are so well situated, so convenient, so tastefully designed, and so well and substantially built. The chapel is an ornament to the town and worthily represents there our great church. Both the architect and builder, as well as those who initiated the scheme

and have piloted it through, may be congratulated. The opening service was full of blessing. The tea tables were crowded. In the evening the chapel was crowded, when Mr J.H. Lile of London, presided. A statement was given by the treasurer, Mr Jennings. Brief addresses were given by The Rev E. Sinzininex, Messrs. W.H. Reed and J. Littlejohn. Then the President addressed the meeting at length in his own easy and interesting style.

The quarterly meeting was held at Crediton on June 29th 1892, when the membership was given as 31, with 23 juniors.

The first wedding solemnised in the new church was on March 26th 1895, between Mr G.H. Harris, of The Factory, Wadebridge and Miss Ellen Amy Stoye, second daughter of Mr William Stoye, Postmaster Crediton. The happy couple were presented with a handsomely bound copy of the Bible and Wesley's hymns.

## **THE CHAPEL GROWS**

The premises were extended and altered over the course of the next 20 years. First was the "Jennings Memorial Hall." Chick explains that Richard Jennings, treasurer of the Trust, met with a sad accident on August 23rd 1895. He was knocked down by his pony which took fright at some cyclists, and died on September 4th. The hall at the rear of the church became without another thought the Jennings Memorial. Mr F. Newcombe's tender of £198.15.0 was accepted at a trustees

meeting on May 6th 1896 and the Hall was opened on October 14th.

At a meeting on March 23rd 1909 the following agenda was discussed:-

- (1) To consider certain proposals for the improvement and extension of the premises. For some time they have been gravely hampered in their efforts to carry on the work by insufficient accommodation. Great difficulty has been found in providing seats that are acceptable for the worshippers.
- (2) It was proposed to extend the building over the Memorial Hall, providing room for the organ, choir, and seating accommodation for fifty additional persons.
- (3) But the most urgent necessity at present is for a church room for the Women's Class, numbering sixty, now crowded together in a small room.
- (4) Erection of a boundary wall costing £25, doing away with the dangerous steps and constructing a gentle slope from the street to the schoolroom.

On April 21st Mr Stoye reported that he had obtained promises of £156, so it was agreed to get on with the work, Mr Challice of Exeter to be the architect. Tenders were opened on October 19th and that of Mr F. Newcombe, for £642.4.6 was accepted.

The opening day of the new premises and alterations was fixed for Wednesday April 27th 1910.

## THE ORGANS

When Bowden Hill chapel closed in 1892 the Union Road trustees purchased from them a harmonium, tables, forms, etc. for £4. It was a good buy because in 1895 "Mr Guest's offer of £20 for the harmonium" was accepted and a new organ was purchased for £50. An organ platform was erected at a cost of £3.12.0. It was agreed on March 1st 1901 that an organ blower be employed at a salary of 5/- per quarter.

On January 22nd 1919 the trustees agreed the old organ be sold for not less than £50, and a new organ, offered by Mr Osmond of Taunton (through Mr Reed) be purchased for the sum of £240-255. On May 28th it was reported that the old organ had been sold to Shaldon WM Church for £50, and that Mr Osmond would build a new one for £265, completion to be by Wednesday July 2nd, and Mr Douglas Reed be asked to open the organ. Soon after the trustees agreed that a tablet be fixed on or near the organ denoting that it was a "Peace Memorial".

After forty years of good service the organ began to show the need for repair, so an Organ Fund was started in January 1960. The response was so good that the work was put in hand by May 1961, at a cost of £412. The reopening and dedication of the chancel steps rail took place on March 14th

1962 by Mrs G.M. Tennant, the organ being played by Mr A.F. Newcombe. Divine worship followed, the preacher being the Rev J.K. Whitehead, (Chairman of the District) and after tea and community hymn singing a concert was given by the Whitestone Male Voice Choir.

In 1977 £1,000 was spent on the cleaning and general overhaul of the organ. At that time a Balanced Swell Pedal was added to the instrument.

However, at a meeting on 1st May 1984 it was reported that water leaking through the roof had damaged the organ and an ad hoc committee was set up to consider the matter and recommended that rather than repair the existing pipe organ a new electronic organ of Norwich B design should be purchased at a cost of £3,600.

The purchase price was met from trust funds and an organ fund was initiated. On February 25th 1985 it was reported that the fund stood at £1,625 plus the insurance claim money. £656 came from the Autumn Fair, £162 from the sale of plants by Mr Sharp, £60 from Mr Coram, £50 from Judith Ludgate from her sponsored bus ride, and £342 from coffee mornings.

A minute of March 23rd 1987 said that the removal of the old organ was discussed with the possibility of the space gained being used as a second vestry. This removal has now taken place but no decision has been reached on the use of the

area. However the memorial tablet which was formerly on the organ will be re-erected in this area.

The Church Council was told on October 16th 1989 that the electronic organ had been serviced at a cost of over £100. But this was the first expenditure on the organ since its installation.

## TAKEN FROM THE MINUTES

The following extracts from minute books throw light on church life during our history.

*December 20th 1880.* Reference was made to the Tract Distribution Society. Brothers Newcombe and Bennett to select 800 Tracts from the Stirling Tract Society. For the purposes of distribution the town was divided into sixteen districts. It was said very few refused the Tracts.

*January 17th 1895.* Annual meeting of Band of Hope. Programme included recitation, music and two addresses. There was a good attendance and friends showed their appreciation of the programme, which lasted over 2 hours, by remaining to the end.

The Band of Hope was no doubt necessary when an Exeter brewery was offering its ale at 14p gallon. Incidentally a bumper crop of apples in 1829 reduced the price of cider to 2d a quart. Its cheapness led to excess. The earliest Methodists had seen no harm in moderate drinking.

One wonders what the concert was really like since the writer seems to think it remarkable that the audience had remained throughout the lengthy proceedings.

A Wesley Guild was formed in November 1899. By June 1900 it had a membership of 24, with an average attendance of 18. Memories of the Guild meetings include lively charades, in which Mr V. Tennant took a leading part, and were so gripping that the audience forgot it had to look for a word.

On Wednesday August 1st 1900, the Rev L.B. Dalby gave his popular lecture entitled "Admiral Blake of Bridgewater and the Dutch" to an appreciative audience. This may have been Mr Dalby's swan song as he left the circuit later in the month.

A minute of March 20th 1901 mentions the presentation of a silver mounted malacca cane to the Rev G.H. Armitage, in appreciation of his work in Crediton as a missionary.

*May 1st 1901.* Visit of Exeter Wesleyan Cycling Club, numbering over 30. An open air service was held. The evening closed at 8.20 to enable the cyclists to reach Exeter at an early hour.

*March 12th 1902.* A minute said "seat rents to be reduced as an experiment, for one year, from 1/3d to 1/-d per sitting."

*September 21st 1904.* It was agreed the new MHB be introduced on October 23rd. Fifty to be ordered for Visitors. (A further 24 were ordered in July 1906). Obviously members were expected to provide their own books.

Hymn books change, and after Methodist Union in 1932 a new MHB was published, hence we read on March 6th 1934 "Trustees agreeable to Leaders adopting new hymn book (but without any charge on the trust). Then, on June 12th 1934 it was agreed to write to Mr E.J. Stoye and thank him for the supply of hymn books.

The Wesleyan Church Record of the Exeter Circuit describes an event which took place at Crediton in 1929. The report says 'A very successful Sale of Work was held on December 18th to help pay for the new heating apparatus. J.C. Skewes, Esq., presided, and Miss Betty Brock (accompanied by her mother and grandmother) opened the sale. Tea was provided in the church room, and at 7 p.m. a concert was held. Numbered programmes were sold at 1/- each. Every holder of a programme received a prize, brought by a group of fairies and others dressed in costumes to represent nursery rhymes. Several valuable prizes were given, such as a wristlet watch, gent's watch, dressed dolls, etc. The evening closed with a laughable display, showing how Farmer Giles bought and worked a wireless set. The sum of over £60 was raised, with subscriptions. We have over £100 in the bank towards the cost of installation (£140).



*Above: A Sunday School gathering from around the turn of the century.  
(From the collection of Mr Albert Labbett.)*



*Right: Bright Hour outing, circa 1959.*

*Right: Womens Meeting, Circa 1910.*



*Below: Sunday School Christmas Party, 1959 with our present District Chairman, Rev. Ken Hext standing back left, and the Rev. Gwyrfor Davies 3rd from left.*







*Above: The Rev. Kyle McQuillen, 1959.*



*Above Right: Inside of Church, Circa 1900.*



*Right: The Wesley Guild Tennis Club, circa 1930-32.*

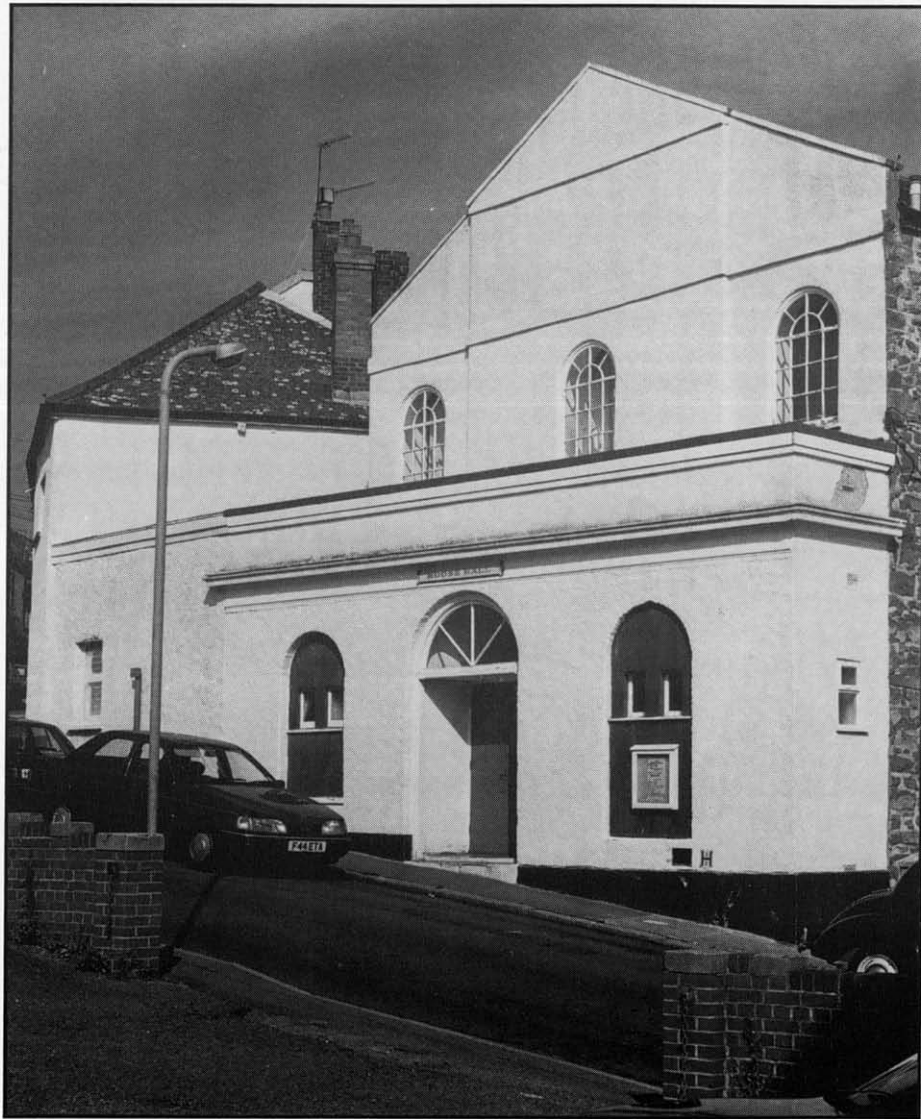


TAKE UP THE

CHALLENGE  
FOR THE  
NCH

Mon-Sat  
8am-6pm

36



*Left: Bowden Hill Chapel (1816-1892).  
Now the Moose Hall.*

*Above Right: April 28th 1892 - Church  
Opening.*

*Below Right: Re-opening of the organ by  
Mrs Tennant on March 14th 1962. The  
preacher was the Rev. J.K. Whitehead  
and the organist Mr A.J. Newcombe.*

*Previous Page: Morning congregaton,  
September 15th 1991.*





*These two pictures show the Chancel area before (above) and after (right) the choir pews were removed. The pulpit has also been moved around the corner and there is the new communion rail on the extended Chancel floor.*

The same issue also said 'We offer our heartiest congratulations to Miss Kathleen Tuck, our Organist and Sunday School Secretary, for having so successfully passed her final examination of the A.B.R.A.M. and R.C.M. We hear she is working very hard for her L.R.A.M. and wish her every success.

*February 6th 1907.* Chapel Anniversary to be held on April 7th, preacher Rev J.H. Morgan, and that he give his popular lecture on Rowland Hill on April 3rd.

*March 4th 1908.* Decided to provide a new notice board for use outside the chapel, to be paid for from the proceeds of a lecture, to be decided on later.

*August 9th 1927.* An estimate was received for electric light of £28.9.0. Mr Stoyle offered to secure shades etc. for the above, at cost price, through a friend.

*September 17th 1939.* The use of the large schoolroom as a YMCA Centre for soldiers was approved.

*September 24th 1939.* The use of small room as a reading and writing room and adjoining room as a recreation room for table tennis, darts etc. was approved.

*January 24th 1940.* Referring to the Boys Brigade it was asked that greater control be exercised over this organisation, owing to its tendency to get out of hand.

*February 2nd 1947.* A request from the Wesley Guild was approved asking permission to have a ping pong table. A condition was made that play ceased before 9.30 p.m.

There was also a flourishing Tennis Club in connection with the Guild. They played on courts at Penton and Exhibition Road. Today, many church members meet regularly on the premises for badminton.

Discussion of Methodist Union began in January 1923. A vote of February 3rd 1925 showed three for, three against and eight neutral. Union of the three main branches of Methodism was achieved in 1932. Local union took longer, but a meeting on April 12th 1951 said "we agree that union of our two churches is necessary and divided witness is wrong." Eventually the Bible Christians and the Wesleyans united in 1954.

In 1952 for the Diamond Jubilee of the Church, a booklet of quotations was produced with contributions from friends far and wide. A Jubilee Service was held, conducted by Rev. Dr. Maldwyn Edwards.

*January 5th 1957.* It was reported that the Congregational church had donated a safe they were disposing of.

Collections during 1893 varied between 10/3½d on January 1st and £14 on August 6th. Most collections were for the extinction of the debt, with quarterly collections for Circuit, Mission and local

preachers horse hire fund. A collection for this on August 13th raised 14/9d. A collection on July 21st 1895 for Worn Out Ministers amounted to 16/5½d. On September 8th the collection was for the sick nurse association and raised £1.19.8½d, 3½d was added to make it £2. Other good causes were Kingswood School, Exminster Chapel, and The Indian Famine Fund. This, on March 21st 1897 raised £2.14.0d. The Christmas Day collection in 1899 raised 16/6½d for Stephenson's and Barnardo's Homes. Obviously the worn out Ministers could not compete with the sick nurse, and were only marginally more important than the horse.

On March 9th 1902, 1/11d was deducted as 2/-d had been put in in error.

## **THE SUNDAY SCHOOL**

The Sunday School, which recorded an average of 90 in the 1851 census increased until in 1901 there were 179 scholars and 20 teachers on the books with average attendances of 99 plus 4 in the morning and 130 plus 18 in the afternoon.

Today the Sunday School has 20 young people, who contribute to the Churches worship in many ways. Mrs Carol Ludgate has recently become Superintendent, following Mrs Margaret Sutherland who had worked for many years in the Sunday School. There are two other teachers, Mrs. Clair Mann and Mrs. Joan Rattenbury.

The young people also meet on Friday evenings

for a drama session led by Robert and Marion Saunders, assisted by the Sunday School teachers. This time is often a preparation for Sunday worship. A games and recreation time then follows and the evening ends with prayers with the choir, in the chancel.

## **MEMORIES OF SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Two of our members have contributed their memories of life in the Sunday School. Mrs. Doris Willson (nee Newcombe), whose family has made such a significant contribution to our history, writes:-

I attended the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School many years ago. On Sunday afternoon I remember the big schoolroom as practically full, the long forms with backs were in rows on each side, with girls on one side, boys on the other. For prayer we turned around and knelt on the forms.

Two or three classes were held in the same room. The infants (as they were called) met in one of the bigger rooms on their own for lessons.

We had star cards which were stamped with a star for attendance. The little room with the pigeon hole was the secretary's office, where the cards were stamped.

In our class we were given a text to learn and to say the following week, and we had a mark for doing so. Prize-giving was held early in the year, a secular concert was given by the children, after much practice, and much patience from the teachers. Every child had a prize and special prizes were given for full attendance and most marks.

Sunday School Anniversary was another big day. A platform was erected at the front of the church, all the children sitting there, with the little ones in front.

A special set of hymns was used which were very tuneful, and items were given by different age groups. Most of the children came again to the evening service.

Miss Maggie Cann was the JMA Secretary and money was taken to her each week or month collected. I remember Saturday morning was my job collecting from the Green to Fordton. It would be a penny a week from some, twopence a month from others, and woe betide me if I missed a week. It was not easy to get the £5 a year!

Another big event was the Sunday School outing in July. Two special trains were run to Exmouth for all the Sunday Schools in the town, one for the Church of England, one for all the Nonconformist Sunday Schools. I think tea was often provided and a happy day was spent.

After a few years the Primary Department was run separately with its own Superintendent and

staff. Once or twice a year the School was inspected by a local preacher.

When older I taught in the Primary Department and later became Primary Superintendent.

Mr. Cyril Wollacott has given us his memories, from a slightly later period. This is probably the place at which to include a tribute to Cyril. It would be impossible to estimate the practical service he has given us, but if ever something needs to be done with saw, screwdriver or paintbrush Cyril is never far away.

He writes:- My earliest memory would be about 1933 when the Primary Teacher was Miss Newcombe (now Mrs. Willson), who used to play a pedal type harmonium and the class was held in what is now called the Brown room. Miss F. Discombe was also a teacher. The small chairs and tables were used, the tables about the size of card tables, about 14" high with green top. Sunday School was then held in the morning and again in the afternoon at 2.30 p.m.

There was little in the way of motor traffic then, mainly horse drawn cabs, so before Sunday School the children were kept outside the gates of the church by (in the 1930's) Mr. John Shipman.

In the Senior School the Superintendent was Mr. S. Mogridge (who died only a few months before these notes were written). In the early days his sisters were in the school, also the two Misses Goss, one of whom became Mrs. Mogridge and the



other Mrs. Hurst. At first Mrs. Hurst used to see to the attendance books but was pianist in the post-war years.

Until the war years the main school was held in the schoolroom (or Hall) with two rows of forms (one of which is still in the schoolroom). Girls sat on the right, boys on the left. The office in which Mrs. Hurst sat was under the stairs. The heat in winter was provided by a Tortoise stove.

During the war the main schoolroom was taken over by the YMCA and the Sunday School was conducted in what was then called the Church Room (now used by the Playgroup).

Sunday School Anniversaries were special occasions and each scholar was expected to say a poem, or sing. Special hymns and demonstrations were the order of the day. There were two other Methodist Churches then (High Street and Fordton) and with the Congregationalists each would visit the others for Anniversaries. Another united venture was the annual Sunday School outing, usually to Exmouth, when a special train ran from Crediton with all the Sunday Schools (except the Brethren). Tea in the years before the war was usually at Clapp's Cafe, behind the lifeboat station.

During the war Mr. Mogridge and all the other young men at church were called up, and a Mr. J. Steer of the Brethren took over. No outing to the sea could be taken so on some occasions we joined

with Newton St. Cyres and had games in a field there.

After the war there were many changes of Superintendent. Mr. Wright served for a time, then when High Street closed in 1954 the Superintendent there, Mr. Ball, was asked to take over, but this was overruled by the minister, the Rev. L. Farmer.

For most of the time from 1948-70 I was in the Sunday School as Superintendent apart from a brief period when Mr. King was in office. Mrs. Hurst was for many years the pianist and Mrs. A. Phillips was treasurer.

Times were changing and children were more difficult to handle under the old methods of teaching. But the introduction of drawing was frowned on by the older members.

The number of scholars declined and the day outing to the sea by train had to stop as British Rail altered its set up, and not enough children were going on these outings to warrant a day off from school.

The Sunday School had an annual prize giving and concert, held in the Schoolroom. Boys' Brigade and Life Boys were run by some Sunday School teachers (mainly Mr. F. Summerwell).

Mr W. Elston, who with Mr F. Summerwell, worked to establish a Boys Brigade company in

Crediton, also remembers a very active Young Men's Bible Class, which made regular Sunday afternoon visits to Hookway, where an open air service was held. Mr Elston has a newspaper cutting of a meeting of this class in 1928.

## THE BIBLE CHRISTIANS

Although this is the story of the Wesleyan Methodist church in Crediton, brief mention should be made of the Bible Christian churches of the town. Pioneer Bible Christians were Mr and Mrs Hedger who came to Crediton from Frithelstock. The 1861 census shows them as living in Threshers. Elizabeth Hedger was then aged 42, her husband 44. Mrs Hedger was a local preacher and joined with a Miss Vicary in holding services in a cottage at Landscore, then in another near the Green, out of which evolved, on the same site, a place of worship to seat 200. This information is given in Venn (II 165). The High Street chapel (now Brethren) was opened in 1860, and a smaller one at Fordton in 1899. There was also a preaching place at Stokes Farm, Shobrooke, in a building provided by the farmer, at which services were held from 1888 to 1910.

At the time of the building of the Wesleyan Methodist church the Bible Christians were extending their premises, which had become too small for the numbers attending. The foundation stones of the new portion were laid on October 12th 1891. The architect was Mr James Crocker of Exeter and the contractor Mr J.S. Brook of Credi-

ton. The building was doubled in length, an adjoining cottage being demolished to accomplish this. During the alterations the Bible Christians met at the Congregational church, each church alternately providing a preacher.

The re-opening services were held on Sunday and Monday January 31st and February 1st 1892. On the Sunday the President (the Rev F.W. Bourne) preached three times. The Bible Christian magazine said "It was a good day. The chapel was nearly full in the morning, quite full in the afternoon, and crowded at night when many persons were unable to get in." So, in the space of three months Crediton was visited both by the President of the Bible Christian church and the President of the WM church.

Clearly much had happened since 1886, when an evangelist, Mr Kelley submitted a report to the Bible Christian magazine. He wrote "on Saturday October 3rd we held a meeting with about 20 present. It was a good service. They all agreed that a revival was needed in the churches, needed in the homes of the people. In John Wesley's journal Kirton is spoken of as a "wicked place." And it is wicked still. There is a theatre not far from our chapel which at the same time was crowded." (The 'theatre' mentioned here was probably the Assembly Room of Crediton Public Rooms, which building was opened in 1853. It is now a furniture store.

The Bible Christian Society united with the Wesleyans in 1954, and the trustees agreed to

accept the offer of "the Gospel Hall people" of £2,375 and for them to take possession when it was arranged by their solicitors. The Bible Christian building is now known as High Street Chapel.

The Fordton Bible Christian church served from 1899 until 1967, when services ceased on the 3rd September. The final meeting of the trustees was held on December 16th 1968. The building is now a Post Office stores.

From the time of the closure of Fordton Methodist work in Crediton has been centred upon Union Road.

Membership of the Church, which had been 34 in 1844, was 42 in 1894, 55 in 1900, 58 in 1940, 71 in 1960 (this was after the union of the WM and BC churches). The present membership is 133.

After the opening of Union Road the premises at Bowden Hill were used first as a drill hall, then from 1925 were leased to the Roman Catholic Church and is now the Moose Hall.

## **TESTIMONY**

A written testimony exists of a young man's experience about 1863. His life had reached a crisis and he decided to respond to an invitation to attend the young men's bible class which was part of the Sunday school at Bowden Hill. But he had not the courage to go alone and went into a friend's house. At about 10.30 a.m. a group of people

passed by and he was told they were going to the Methodist chapel. He followed them, and took a back seat in the gallery. The preacher's demeanour impressed him as he looked very happy and seemed to enjoy religion. In the afternoon he went with his cousin, only to find the Bible Class had lapsed. So he joined the infants, but one of the young men in charge was absent, having just married, and the other left at 3 to go a courting. So the newcomer became the teacher. His clearest memory of that afternoon was hearing Miss Hunt sing hymns to the infants of the love of Jesus. This strengthened his desire for similar faith. But now he had to go home past his old companions. Outside the chapel a man taunted him "halloa, turned Methody then?" He went home over the fields, but returned to chapel in the evening, it being dark by then. The preacher was a young man named Burden, who became the leader of the Bible Class attended by the young man who told the story. Two others were with them, G. Jones and H. Hosegood. The Holy Spirit worked within them and their numbers increased. This, he said, was achieved without a mission or special services. It was the witness of young men earnestly seeking the Lord which made an impact on others.

The young man digressed briefly from his story to say that the Miss Hunt who had so impressed him was the daughter of the Rev. John Hunt, pioneer Fijian Missionary. It would be fascinating to follow up this story but my first enquiries have not taken it any further.

## IN MEMORIAM

Something of the history of our church and its people can be gleaned from the memorials within it. As already mentioned the organ was a memorial to the 1914-18 war and to the men from the church who lost their lives. Two of the wall tablets are reminders of personal sadness. One was erected "In loving memory of C.Q.M.S. E.C. Purse, aged 27, and SGT L.S. Purse aged 21, of the 1st Devons. Sons of S. and E. Purse of this town, who fell during the Great War in France 1914-18".

The second reads "In loving memory of Percy John Shipman (wireless operator). Aged 26 years, who fell in India, September 29th 1919.

*"Son of J and M. Shipman of this town."*

Mr and Mrs Shipman were active members of the church.

The larger communion table is a memorial to "Ellen Furse, for many years a devoted worker in this church. Presented by her husband and family." (It is believed this table came from Whipton and does not relate to a Crediton family).

The Chancel window is dedicated "To the memory of Minnie Newcombe (1870-1941) and Frederick Newcombe (1872-1946)."

Mr. and Mrs. Newcombe were Mrs Doris Willson's parents and he was the builder of the extension.

The smaller communion table is inscribed "To the glory of God and in loving memory of Bessie Camilla Steer," and the vase which stands on it is "In loving memory of Milly Newcombe (1880-1951)."

Milly Newcombe served the church in many quiet ways. She cared for the chapel crockery and when replacements were needed would collect and sell watercress to raise the funds. She was Mrs. Willson's Aunt.

The old pewter communion vessels have the inscription "A memento of Love to the cause of Wesleyan Methodism in Crediton. Presented through the Rev George Curnock by SR October 12th 1845."

The three daughters of the Rev Cyrus Burge gave copies of Hymns and Psalms for organ and congregation, and these were dedicated on Palm Sunday 1985.

The Rev. Cyrus and Mrs. Burge came to live in Crediton upon their retirement and were greatly loved by the congregation. Their neighbours were the Rev. and Mrs. Frank Chamberlain, who were also held in high regard. Their homes, now occupied by the Rev. and Mrs. S. Dixon and the Rev. Joan Ryeland, are the property of the Ministers' Housing Society.

The offertory dish is "In memory of a devoted and

loving wife, Ada Emily Gray 1977." Two sets of alms bags were presented in memory of Alfred Braund, 1985, and W.G. Theedom, 1989.

Four of our pioneer workers are commemorated by wall tablets. They read:-

In loving memory of WILLIAM STOYLE who fell asleep August 21st 1912 aged 77. For over 46 years he faithfully served this church in all its offices and the remaining debt on its extension was discharged as a grateful memorial of this life's work. Genesis V: 24.

Mr Stoye was the Grandfather of the late Mary Tennant.

In loving memory of GEORGE NEWCOMBE who entered into rest 30th August 1913 aged 68 years. For nearly 50 years he was a faithful local preacher in the Exeter circuit:- A Class Leader of this Society, a Sunday School Superintendent, and a visitor of the sick and poor. The memory of the just is blessed.

Mr. Newcombe was the Grandfather of Mrs. Doris Willson.

To the loving memory of RICHARD BROWNING. Entered into rest 1st April 1928, aged 81 years.

*"Thou, O Christ, art all I want."*

Richard Browning was a very dear friend of George Newcombe and preached his Memorial

Sermon. In the course of the sermon he told of a preaching journey they made together.

"I recall one on the journeys he and I went together. He was planned at Christow, a place 14 miles distant over some of the worst roads in Devonshire. I was planned at Leigh Cross, about two miles nearer Crediton. It was a bitterly cold day, with sleet and snow coming down. But we had plenty of exercise to keep us warm. We had only a small pony with a conveyance much too big for it. The pony carried us downhill and on level ground, but at every hill we had to get out and push. We arrived home thoroughly tired. I fancy I can see the cheerful fire and the warm slippers awaiting him, and hear him saying as he rested after his hard day's work "I am at home." He was tired in but not of the work. At home! surrounded by his loved ones! Back from a day's work for the Master."

Such was the calibre of our Fathers in the Faith.

Mr Browning was a cobbler and a Local Preacher. He and his family lived next door to the church in what is now the hairdresser's shop.

In memory of WILLIAM PERKINS HARPER, who fell asleep February 22nd 1880, aged 72. For upwards of 40 years he earnestly devoted himself to the best interests of Methodism in this town. God honoured him, and the site for this building was purchased through his liberality. I Thess. 4: 14.

The Communion Rail has the inscription "To the

Glory of God And in Loving memory of ELIZABETH and ERNEST STOYLE, also VICTOR F. TENNANT'. The attachment to the rail for Communion cups was given 'To the Glory of God, In Loving Memory of HORACE JAMES TURNER, called home July 30th 1977, from his wife and family'.

A framed tapestry in the Chancel depicting the Last Supper bears a plaque 'For His Love to me G.M. TENNANT 1976'.

The two flower pedestals are (1) In Memory of PERCY F. LOBB. A Faithful Member and Steward. December 1968 and (2) In Loving Memory, DORA MARGARET MADGE 1915-1986.

The clock was given in memory of PRUDENCE BALL, 1886-1971.

The latest memorial gift is the lectern, made locally in the workshops of Berry and Vincent, given in memory of MRS. M. TENNANT. This gift was dedicated on November 10th, 1991.

## THE BRIGHT HOUR

An important part of the life of the church is the Women's Bright Hour. By a happy coincidence the year of our Centenary is the Golden Jubilee of the Bright Hour. This was founded in 1942 and a Founder Member, Mrs. Lucy Short, became the first President. The secretary was Mrs. W. Newcombe and the treasurer Mrs. Amy Phillips. Notable members in those days were Mrs. Lobb

(famous for her Devonshire readings), Mrs. Jones and Miss M. Newcombe. Mrs. Newcombe became President in 1950 and carried on until 1980. Mrs. Tarr became secretary in 1976 and served until leaving for Copplestone in 1989 when Mrs. K. Wollacott accepted the office. The oldest members at present are Mrs. Wollacott, Mrs. Elston, Mrs. Willson and Mrs. Hurst.

Notable members down the years have included Miss Banberry (formerly of High Street), a Matron at QE School, Mrs. Ivy Hext (a local preacher and mother of our District Chairman, the Rev. Kenneth Hext) and Mrs Tennant.

## THE SERVANTS OF THE CHURCH

It has not been easy to compile a list of ministers who have served Crediton and the following is incomplete. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that for a long period we were served by ministers living in Exeter. At least we know that the last name on this list is correct.

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| 1934-37 | G. Whitefield Luty  |
| 1936-46 | William Proctor (Mr. Proctor later became 'District Missionary' or District Chairman without pastoral charge) |
| 1945-51 | J. Oswald Law   |
| 1951-55 | Leslie G. Farmer  |
| 1954-57 | Ronald Williamson, M.A. (the first to live in Crediton in the Manse on Belle Parade)                          |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| 1957-62 | Gwynfor Davies  |
| 1962-65 | Alan R. James   |
| 1965-70 | C. Edgar Stephenson, M.A., B.D.                           |
| 1970-77 | Reg C. Edmonds, B.D. (first to live in the present Manse) |
| 1977-82 | Kenneth V. Hearn  |
| 1982-87 | Barbara M. Facey  |
| 1987-90 | I. Howard Rees, B.A.                                      |
| 1990-   | Robert O. Saunders, B.A.                                  |

The present Church Stewards are Mr. K. Turner, Mr. J. Ashley, Mrs. A. Harvey, Mrs. C. Dixon, Mrs. M. Tyson, Mr. L. Sutherland and Mr. P. Ramsbottom.

The Church Secretary is Mr. John Ashley and the Treasurer Mrs. Karen Theedom. Our organists are Ken Turner, John Ludgate and Cliff Fidler. Mrs. M. Tyson is NCH Secretary, Mrs. C. Gregory is Catering Secretary, Mrs. M. Ashley is Cradle Roll Secretary, Mr. and Mrs. R. Ash and Mrs. K. Wollacott are Communion Stewards, with Mr. Ray Burnett Treasurer of the Benevolent Fund. Rev. Joan Ryeland is Overseas Missions Secretary, Mrs. M. Webb is secretary for Home Missions, and Mr. and Mrs. P. Ramsbottom are JMA Secretaries. Mrs. Ellen Palmer is Church Flower Secretary. Committee secretaries are Mr. R. Ash (Property), Mrs. S. Fidler (Family), Mrs K. Metherell (Pastoral).

Local Preachers who are members at Crediton are Mr. S. Gardener (1927), Mr. W.J. Allin (1933), Mrs. C.E. Dixon (1965), Mr. M. Rogers (1969), Mrs. M. Saunders (1975) and Mrs. C. Ludgate (1983).

Paul Ramsbottom and Mark Turner are Youth Venture Secretaries. They have organised a number of social activities, but of course their aims are much deeper.

A recent Church Council confirmed the appointment of Mr. Ken Saunders as a lay worker. With the support of his wife, Margaret, Ken will work in the Church for 8-16 hours a week, helping our Minister in administrative tasks and in the exercise of his particular interests in overseas work and social responsibility. Ken is our DSR Secretary.

A tape ministry is run by the Church which gives the house bound the opportunity to share in our worship. Morning services are recorded by Mrs Christine Turner and then duplicated on a high speed copier.

## REV. KYLE McQUILLEN

A regular visitor to Crediton was a young American Minister, the Rev. Kyle McQuillen, who was studying at Exeter University. He was often entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Willson. In their Visitors' Book he wrote on June 11th 1959 "I shall miss many people but I say with all sincerity that those whom I shall miss most reside at 10 Union Road. I can say with all honesty that in the many dozens of times I have come to your house I have never felt there was not a welcome, indeed a Christian welcome from you all. And while we could speak seriously of the love we have for our common

Saviour, there was at the same time no lack of humour and good fun. Every time I came I could sense that Jesus Christ was the Head of this house."

The hospitality spoken of by Mr McQuillen was a strong family tradition. The funeral service of Mrs Willson's mother, Mrs Minnie Newcombe, was conducted by the local Minister, the Rev. W. Proctor, assisted by Captain the Rev. J. Law, CF. Mr Law was Chaplain to the Gloucester Regiment, when quartered in Crediton. He found a ready welcome in the Newcombe home and returned to Crediton for the funeral service as his tribute to the kindness he had received. Other soldiers could also testify to the warmth and welcome of the Methodist Church and its members.

## THE CHURCH LOOKS AHEAD

First we look to our 100th Birthday. On Sunday April 26th our preacher will be the Rev. Amos Cresswell, our former Chairman. Then on Tuesday 28th, 100 years to the day from our opening we are to have a visit from the President of the Conference, the Rev. Ronald W.C. Hoar who will preach in the afternoon. In the evening at our Rally the speaker will be the Rev. Kenneth Hext.

There is a proposal that as a Centenary project we should build a new porch and entrance to our church. Plans have been drawn up by architects Mr. Edward Holden and Mr. Nick Gilbert Scott.

These plans have yet to be discussed with the whole church and no decision has yet been made. The scheme has yet to be costed, but when we do have figures presented to us we should remember the challenge faced by those who came before us. 100 years ago, when the membership was given as 31, they raised the sum of £1,725 plus £35 for the heating apparatus, and so our church was built.

Probably that sum was comparable to the cost of today's projected scheme.

In this Booklet we have looked back, and finish with a vision of the future. So, in the words of the favourite hymn

*We'll praise Him for all that is past,  
And trust Him for all that's to come.*

It is to be hoped that the above record of some of the events and personalities of the last 100 years will make it plain that ours is a church with a past.

Those of us who are its members in 1992 must worship and witness in ways that will make it plain that ours is a church with a future.



# THE PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO OUR CHURCH

(Drawn by Mr E. Holden and Mr N. Gilbert-Scott.)



GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

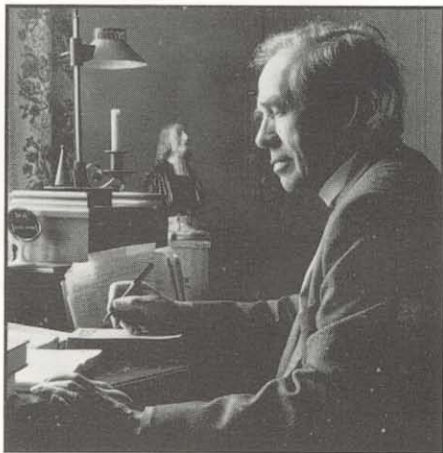
Congratulations as you come to your Century! If you were a batsman at cricket scoring one hundred or a snooker player making a "break" of that amount, you would receive great applause on such an achievement. You deserve praise as a church and I am glad to be associated with all the rejoicing that will take place.

I doubt whether any of you reading this are as old as the church, but you can imagine some of the vast changes which have taken place in our society over those years. Methods of travel and communication and even of building churches have developed beyond what could ever have been imagined in 1982. Thus it is important that we do not put the emphasis on "lasting for one hundred years" but on "developing throughout one hundred years". There will have been many wonderful moments for you to recall and many experiences you have shared. I hope they will all have contributed to your learning more about the God you seek to serve and helped to develop your understanding of how Jesus works through his church.

Now to the future. There's lots waiting to be done and God still needs you in Crediton. I pray that you can anticipate with eagerness what God is going to do through you in the years to come. Please be completely open to Him and ready to be guided by his spirit. The Lord bless you and keep you.

Yours sincerely,

*Lawrence Spar*



The life of Crediton Methodist Church has been greatly enriched by our two remarkable Supernumerary Ministers; the Rev Joan Ryland and the Rev Sidney Dixon.

Joan has, from her experience of the Church overseas, given a wider dimension to our Missionary efforts.

Sidney, with his wide experience of rural Methodism in various parts of the country and his amazing sense of humour makes a great

contribution to our Church life. We did think that a chapter of this Centenary Booklet should have been given over to the "Wit and Wisdom" of the Rev Sidney Dixon. But perhaps the editor would not have allowed it!

As a Church we are extremely grateful to Sidney for the way in which he has so meticulously researched the history of our Church. We are thankful for the way in which he has edited and created this booklet to remind us, throughout this special year, of our heritage.

*(He has said that if any errors are found in this booklet, please tell him, and he will personally see that they are corrected in his next edition, the "Bi-Centenary"!!)*

Now we entrust ourselves and the Church to that same God who in Jesus inspired our founders and by the Holy Spirit continues to sustain us all in the service of our Lord.

Text by Sidney Dixon, special photography by Ken Saunders.  
Production by Phillips & Co., Printers, Crediton, to whose staff special thanks are given.

